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The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

Author of "GRETCHEN," "THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN," "SHEBA," etc., etc.

Book VI.

CHAPTER III.

BELLA DEMONIA.

THE great Mixson sat in his office—attendant as ever on those literary aspirants who might be deluded into believing they possessed genius, and needed but the fostering care of a publisher to utilize that enviable possession.

To him entered with bated breath and respectful air one of the staff of clerks who contributed to the glory and well-doing of the illustrious firm.

"A gentleman to see you, sir—important business, he says."

The great man took the card and read the name. Then his august brow cleared.

"Admit him," he said.

The speedy permission surprised the clerk, who was not aware that the "divinity that hedged" a title, wore a very perceptible halo for Mixson and Co.

The firm as represented by its principal was urbanely gracious to the visitor, who indeed was no other than Lord Amersley. "And what may I have the pleasure of doing for your lordship?" he inquired.

"I have called simply to know if you can give me the address of Miss Ormatroyd?" answered the visitor.

His face was pale, his eyes had the strained anxious look of sleeplessness. His voice was so perceptibly nervous that duller ears than the great Mixson's might have noticed it. The question, however, was like the proverbial "red rag to a bull." Mixson grew crimson to his very brow, and offended wrath flashed from his eyes.

"Why do you come to me?" he exclaimed angrily. "I have nothing to do with Miss Ormatroyd, nor do I know anything about her except that she behaved in a most unbusinesslike—not to say unladylike—manner to me. Broken her contract, refused to write for me any more after signing an agreement for five years, and . . . well, has bolted goodness knows where, the moment I threatened legal proceedings. Accused me of cheating her. *Me!* The head of one of the oldest and most respectable firms of publishers in all England. And she was encouraged and backed up in all this by a canting smooth-tongued scoundrel calling himself a clergyman. Fine clergyman indeed to cheat a man of his lawful rights! I'd have the law of him too, if I could. However between them they've effectually spoilt Miss Ormatroyd's reputation, for if she won't write for me she can't write for any one else, and a writer who lets herself die out of the memory of the public is soon shelved altogether——"

"Excuse me," said Paul, breaking across this torrent of just wrath. "But all this merely relates to your business concerns with Miss Ormatroyd. It has nothing to do with me. If you are unacquainted with her address I need trouble you no further. I suppose you cannot say *when* she left London?"

"I neither know nor care! She may go to the devil for me!" was the polite response.

Amersley's face flushed. "That is scarcely the way to speak of a lady," he said. "Even in the relative positions of author and publisher I should have thought her sex demanded some slight courtesy."

"Oh, courtesy be hanged!" cried Mixson. "I behave to my authors as they behave to me. If they act on the square so do I; if they don't—well, they only get what they deserve."

Lord Amersley had risen to his feet, angry and indignant, but he did not desire to make a scene in such a place, and before a room full of grinning clerks.

"I won't detain you any longer," he said curtly. "I see you

have no information to give me, and as Miss Ormatroyd is a personal friend of mine I have no desire to hear your opinion of her. It cannot possibly affect any one who knows her."

He quitted the office then, and left Mixson to swear as he pleased—a proceeding which that worthy individual indulged in at intervals for some considerable time after his departure.

For Sheba had kept her word and would write for him no more ; and it was scarcely likely, therefore, that he should regard her favourably.

Disheartened and anxious, Paul once more found himself in the crowded streets. He could not understand the cause of Sheba's disappearance, nor could he imagine any reason for her secrecy towards himself. Surely she might have written, have told him she was leaving town. At least she owed him the bare courtesies of friendship, if she had forbidden all tenderer intercourse. Suspense began to engender anger, and the shock of disappointment naturally re-acted on his strained nerves, and sorely troubled heart.

He was at a loss what to do next. Suddenly the thought of the Pharamonds flashed across him. Bessie might know. At least he would ask her, and without a moment's hesitation he called a hansom and had himself driven to her house.

As he caught sight of closed shutters and papered windows, a thrill of disappointment again ran through his veins. He felt the hopelessness of hope even while he rang the bell and listened to the shuffling steps of the caretaker who came along the tiled hall to answer it.

The answer was but what he expected. The family were in Paris—had left some weeks before. He gave his card mechanically, and turned away and walked slowly down the street with bent head and listless step. He had not proceeded far when the sound of some one running, and a vigorous shout of that euphonious English hail known as "Hi!" caused him to turn round. He saw a flying apron, a dingy cap, and a breathless flannel-footed female speeding towards him. As she drew near he perceived it was the same personage who had just received his card.

Pantingly she gasped out something to the effect that she had made a mistake. The countess had come back to town for a few days on important business, and desired to see him that evening after ten o'clock.

Paul looked at the breathless incoherent messenger with amazement.

"Are you sure?" he asked—for it seemed more than strange that the countess should desire him to call at that hour.

The woman repeated her words again, declaring her mistress had sent her after him the moment she had seen his card.

"Very well. I will call this evening," Paul said, more surprised than pleased. And with that assurance the panting Mercury returned, and closed the door upon herself and her mystery.

Perturbed and wondering, Paul took his way back to his hotel. He had not gone to his own house as he had given no intimation of his arrival.

The more he thought of the Countess Pharamond's message the more strange and unaccountable it seemed: but she was his last resource. He did not know the name or address of Mrs. Levison's Jewish relations, and he had a conviction that if any one could acquaint him with their movements, or present address, it would be Bessie.

The deepening sense of annoyance and perplexity that Sheba's long silence had occasioned, was heightened considerably by this inexplicable and purposeless mystery with which she had chosen to surround her movements. It was not right, or kind, or like her, to act in such a manner, and the sense of his own helplessness added to the just and natural anger caused by so unexpected a check.

The long hours of the weary day passed at length, and he found himself at the house in Grosvenor Street, awaiting admission.

The same shuffling, flannel-footed female opened the door, and led him along the deserted-looking hall, finally throwing open a door from whence issued a brilliant flood of light and requesting him to walk in.

Whatever signs of unoccupation and dreariness might be in the rest of the mansion there were none here, in this dainty chamber with its glowing fire and shaded rose-lights, and certainly if Flannel-foot was the only domestic she deserved great credit for the laying-out of that *tête-à-tête* supper-table, with its crystal and silver, its dainty dishes, and delicate fruits and sparkling wines.

Paul's astonished eyes had scarcely time to take it in, when the figure of the woman who rose to greet him compelled his further

attention. It was impossible to withhold a man's admiration for a beautiful picture, as he looked at the sweeping folds of pale pink velvet, and the filmy gossamer and lace which flowed from head to foot, at the deep gold of the corn-coloured hair, and the strangely brilliant eyes that gave him so glad yet timid a welcome.

Yet even as he heard her speak and held her hand, a strange uneasy feeling stole over him—a chill presentiment of evil that he could not explain to himself.

He seated himself beside the fire. His manner was constrained and uncomfortable, and when he endeavoured to speak of the real object of his visit that morning he found himself met by a laughing and incredulous challenge that increased his embarrassment.

The countess chose to believe that he knew of her visit to town, and had called solely to see her. There was also an abandonment and recklessness about her whole manner that made Paul seriously uneasy.

Great ladies in society do not, of course, ever descend to the vulgarity of vulgar stimulants—but even Comet wines and guinea brands may have an effect as exhilarating as those less choice beverages which are apt to land Molly the charwoman, and Betty the cook, in occasional difficulties; necessitating the interference of the guardians of public morals and public peace.

When Paul at length managed to convey his reasons for calling on the countess a look of anger darkened her brilliant eyes, but with ready tact she hid her annoyance and declared she would tell him nothing until they had had supper.

In vain Paul declared he had no appetite—that his time was limited. She refused to listen to any excuse, and with considerable reluctance he had to take a place at the table by her side.

There was no art of feminine coquetry, no witchery or charm of which her sex is capable, that the Countess Pharamond did not put forth during that repast. She had made up her mind to stake all on this last die—to snatch at the chance which fate had sent her—and by it abide or fall.

Despite himself Lord Amersley found it no easy task to be blind to her beauty or deaf to her hints as she challenged him with sparkling wine, and sparkling glances, and with mingled wit and *abandon* tried to make him oblivious—for at least a time—of the real object of his visit.

But at last he would be fenced with no longer. He pushed

aside his glass, and drew his chair away from the insidious advances of the countess.

"Now, madame," he said courteously, "let me again repeat my request."

"You wish to know where Sheba Ormatroyd is?" she said. "I could tell you, but it would be a breach of confidence. She does not wish you to know her address. Were it otherwise, you must see for yourself how easy it would have been for her to inform you."

She saw the blood flush to his brow and the momentary look of anger in his eyes.

"I can hardly believe that"—he said—"remembering as I do the circumstances of our last meeting. Besides, I have a most important reason for wishing to see her—even against her will. I have a duty to fulfil towards her—and myself. See her I must, even——"

He stopped abruptly. The countess had sprung to her feet and stood facing him, all the wild tumult of feelings long concealed breaking into stormy wrath and unwomanly passion.

"Oh!" she cried, "how can you be so blind? It is not *you* for whom she cares. Haven't you guessed it—seen it—long ago? It is Noel Hill she loves. How could you be so blind as not to guess it?"

For one moment the shock and suddenness and probability of the accusation, staggered Paul. He sank back in his chair, speechless and trembling. His heart seemed to stand still, and all the gladness of hope and the bliss that freedom had promised, alike faded from his sight.

But the natural revulsion of feeling, deep-rooted in such faith as his, came to his rescue. The blood rushed back to brain and heart. He sprang to his feet,

"I don't believe it," he cried passionately. "She could not change. Hers is no light nature. I could doubt myself sooner! There is some mistake—some error. Tell me where she is. Only from her own lips will I believe the truth of what you say."

The face of the woman before him changed then, and the tide of feeling swept all before it. With an energy and recklessness almost terrible she threw herself at his feet.

"I must speak . . . I must speak . . . this is killing me . . . I can bear no more! You know—oh, surely, even if you were

the blindest and coldest of men, you know—what I have felt and borne and struggled against so long. Sheba does not love you as I love you. She never did—she never can—or she would never have left you for all that the world might say. I tell you this. I! . . . yet I have nothing to gain and all to lose . . . No—don't speak, for God's sake! Mad reckless, unwomanly I may seem—but I love you, Paul . . . Oh, God knows I love you! I have been a miserable woman, a cold woman—the world thinks a heartless woman—but not to you—never to you! Surely you might pity me. Would I so lower myself if—if I did not mean it . . . if my very life were not at stake?—”

A burst of wild sobs choked further words. He tried to raise her. He could not speak for shame and horror of this unexpected confession; but at his touch she threw herself into his arms, sobbing wildly and hysterically, and clinging to him with mingled fear and desperation, as if she knew her passionate arms besought a vain support.

As he tried to soothe the wild sobs, and unwind the clinging arms, the door was suddenly burst open, and before them stood Count Pharamond.

CHAPTER IV.

“VICE TRIUMPHANT!”

FOR one moment of horrified and amazed disgust on the one side—of triumph, devilish and unholy, on the other—the two men faced each other in a silence more eloquent than words, and, white as the laces of her gown and trembling like an aspen leaf, the Countess Pharamond shrank aside and covered her face with shuddering hands.

Pharamond spoke first. “So, madame! I have discovered your intrigue at last. It was for *this* you had to leave Paris in such haste—for *this* I was fooled with lies and subterfuge! For this! . . . That you might meet here—alone, unattended, unsuspected—your *lover*!”

The word stung Paul to the quick.

He sprang forward—rage and indignation at the position in which he found himself, lending him the momentary strength to deny what, in a cooler moment, certainly looked undeniable.

"It is false, sir! I came here by mere accident. Your wife will tell you so. However strange appearances are——"

"Strange?"—The count's mocking laugh cut short further words with insolent disbelief. "Strange? *Pardieu*, monsieur! Do you take me for a fool to be hoodwinked thus? At least you might have the courage to stand by your victim. I scarcely suppose she will have the audacity to pretend—innocence."

For one second of hope Paul turned to the shrinking figure cowering there in its terrible abasement. But if he had expected denial, or explanation of his false position, one glance showed him that such expectation was vain.

As for Pharamond, with his profound belief in the depravity of women, and his conviction that his wife had long cherished a guilty passion in her heart for his English rival, he would have believed neither her oath nor Paul's, against this present evidence.

His glance rested on the table, with its picturesque disarray of dishes and glasses, and once again he laughed aloud.

"We are both men of the world, my lord—the situation explains itself. As for you, madame——"

His white face and glittering eyes forced some sign of recognition from that cowed and trembling figure; her hands dropped and she looked at him—with no appeal and no hope.

"You will hear all in good time of the consequences of your actions, my Lord Amersley. I shall be at your service when and where you please."

And he lifted the cane in his hand and struck Paul full across the face.

The insult and the blow maddened the earl. He sprang forward, and seizing Pharamond by the collar he shook him as a dog may shake a rat; then flung him to the ground, where he lay stunned and motionless.

This feat accomplished, he turned to the woman who had tempted and betrayed him—who had unsexed herself for no better purpose than the scorn and contempt of the man whom her treachery had implicated in her own ruin.

"Look at your work, madame, and enjoy its fruits," he said bitterly. "Heaven knows for what purpose you have acted thus and brought shame and disaster upon us both. You knew my heart and life were bound unalienably to another—that no

woman's beauty or sorcery could win my heart from her. Yet to please your vanity you have chosen to draw me into this disgrace. The scandal will be given to the world, and your lost fame will carry with it a murderer's guilt. You have heard your husband's threat. It is no empty one. But I will have no man's blood on my hands. You can guess the sequel of to-night's folly, and profit by it as you please."

Her white lips parted. She tried to beseech some gentle word—she held her trembling hands towards him in pitiful entreaty.

She might as well have appealed to stone. The horror of his look as he drew away, the gesture with which he seemed to sweep her aside from his path—these were crueller stabs than any weapon could have dealt.

She heard the closing of the door, and all around her seemed to grow dark and indistinct; yet with an instinctive fear of being left alone with that motionless figure stretched helplessly before her, she staggered to the bell and rang it loudly.

When the flannel-footed guardian of the lower regions appeared on the scene, which she did—not too quickly—she found no trace of what had occurred, only her mistress lay prostrate on the floor in a dead swoon.

* * * * *

The emotions raging in Paul's breast were not emotions to be envied, or easily described.

It seemed scarcely credible to himself that in so short a space of time he had gone through so much, and become the unwilling hero of a tragedy.

His own private conviction was that husband and wife had played into each other's hands for a purpose. He knew the count had long cherished a deep animosity towards himself; that memory rankled in his breast now and added fresh bitterness to his reflections.

What could have possessed him to fall into such a trap? Why any schoolboy would have been wiser—and yet, on looking back, he saw how unsuspectingly he had accepted the seemingly innocent invitation. He had thought but to put a question—to have an interview of a few moments' duration—and instead of this he found himself engulfed in a catastrophe whose results might mean the ruin of his whole life.

The thought of Sheba came to him as absolute torture. Of

what use would his coveted freedom be now? The scandal and opprobrium of this case could not be avoided. The world would hold him guilty of ruining a woman's reputation, and deem that at least he should stand by her side and in some measure atone for the wreck he had caused.

Who would believe him innocent? It was ridiculous to expect such a thing.

His fate seemed like a curse pursuing him as he hurried along the damp autumn streets, blind and deaf to all around him.

With what gladness and hope he had come to this city—with what loathing and dread he now traversed its gay and brilliant thoroughfares!

If he could have gone to Sheba now—if he could have thrown himself at her feet and confessed his folly and entreated her faith—he felt he might have won both. Not for a moment did he credit the lie of a jealous woman, or believe that she cared for another man. Yet where was she? Why had she chosen to keep herself away from him, and what would she think of the scandal with which society would ring before many days were over?

If he could have borne it alone—but, alas! it would fall on her head no less heavily. And how could he explain the facts of the case while she kept herself so rigidly from his knowledge and reach? The perplexities and difficulties of his position well-nigh maddened him. He felt instinctively that the one wise and friendly counsel he could summon to his aid would be that of Noel Hill. The very name seemed to act as a spell of peace and calm. All the pain and humiliation of that momentary suspicion died out of his heart. If this man were not to be trusted then farewell to all belief in honour or integrity.

With the departure of the first train on the morrow, Amersley was speeding back to Heronsmere. With the dawn of that same morrow the Count Pharamond had resolved to take a surer and more humiliating vengeance on his rival than that of sword or pistol.

He sought the first legal advice possible to ensure success, and left instructions that Lord Amersley was to be duly and formally served with notice to answer for his conduct in the Divorce Court, with damages laid against him of £40,000.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. LEVISON REFUTES A THEORY.

NOEL HILL listened to Lord Amersley's story with a face of unusual gravity.

He saw in a moment the complications of his position, and felt quite unequal to giving an opinion. With regard to Sheba, he knew that her discovery was merely a matter of time, and that Mixson's threat of legal proceedings might have induced her to conceal herself. But the Pharamond affair was far more serious. Paul had foolishly allowed himself to become the victim of a false situation, and one from which it seemed scarcely possible to extricate himself without terrible scandal.

For a day or two he lived in hourly expectance of the threatened challenge, but instead of it he received a curt legal document informing him of Count Pharamond's intentions, and that he would be duly served with a citation to appear in the Divorce Court as co-respondent in the suit of Pharamond *v.* Amersley.

This assurance of the worst overwhelmed the household at Heronsmere with consternation.

Long and eager were the discussions of the three men, but they brought about no results. Paul consulted his own lawyers, but though those gentlemen assured him cheerfully that the count "had not a leg to stand on" legally, they could not promise success to their client, or suggest any method of avoiding the scandal that the case was bound to occasion, whatever its issue.

And it was the scandal Paul dreaded. He knew that by no fair or decent measures could any evidence of guilt be produced against him, but there seemed something terrible to his sensitive nature in having caused a woman to face such an ordeal—even such a woman as the Countess Pharamond.

The strain and suspense began to tell heavily upon him, and Müller and Noel Hill grew uneasy as they saw how moody and irritable he had become.

"There is but one thing to console him," said Müller at last. "Sheba must be found, and you or I, my friend, must find her. She must not hear this from a strange source . . . it would kill her. Perhaps it is best I go. I know her. Have I not before

been with her in an hour more dark—a trial more heavy? Yes, I will go. You must stay and comfort our poor Paul. It is hard for him—very hard. Ah, love—what it costs! At once the world's maker and destroyer—changing the dove to an eagle, the lamb to the tiger; the spirit of life as of death to the soul."

"And yet," said Noel Hill, "the heart of man is but a wilderness before the Angel of Love passes over it, changing it into a garden of roses whose scents shall never die."

The old German looked at him quickly. "So you know something of that fatal magic! Some may gather the roses; others may but breathe the scent. You remember the Eastern legend? At the entrance of the soul stands an angel called Love, holding in one hand a sword, in the other a rose. But while many feel the sharp sword pierce their hearts, to few only is it given to possess the rose."

Noel was silent. Full well he knew that for him had been the sword . . . that never in his life again would he do aught but breathe the far faint scent of the rose that another had gathered. He did not complain. Meekly and silently he bore his cross, as many and many a man and woman in this weary work-a-day world has borne it—bore it so bravely that no one suspected he had any burden at all; least of all the man who was his rival, and to whose sick soul he ministered with such patience and gentleness as won even Müller's gruff praise.

"I go on my quest," he said. "To you I leave Paul. Your good words serve him better than ever mine did; they give consolation. Mine but knock at the door of the sore heart; they do not enter."

Whether Noel Hill's entered it was hard to say.

Paul grew daily more morose and despairing. They did not tell him the real reason of Müller's departure; simply that he had gone to London to attend some scientific meetings. He made no observation beyond wishing him a good journey, but after his departure he withdrew more and more from Noel's society, and passed almost the whole day shut up in his private study in gloomy meditation upon his untoward fate. There was no active demand upon his time—nothing to rouse him from his growing despair. Hour after hour, and day after day, he sat brooding in solitude, and refusing even the presence of his son.

Noel Hill did his utmost to rouse him, though with faint

success. It seemed as if body and mind had succumbed to this last blow, and that neither had the will nor the strength to rally.

Books seemed to have lost their interest ; the discussions into which he had once plunged with the exhilarating delight of a swimmer who knows his own strength could no longer arouse the sympathy of the intellect, or the emotions of the heart. Revolt, dismay, disgust with life, and that fate attending life which no man's will or endeavour may avert—these alone seemed to have their will with him.

"Do not speak to me of mercy, or peace," he cried impatiently to Noel. "The shadow of my past is ever on me. I am doomed to be unhappy. Hope never yet presented me with aught but a Tantalus' cup. I have ceased to believe in it now."

And Noel, recognizing wisely enough that mood and temper were strung up to breaking point, and that, unknown to himself, Paul was approaching a crisis in his life, forbore to irritate the jarred nerves and sensitive nature with aught save the gentlest and tenderest sympathy.

Meanwhile Müller was pursuing his quest of Sheba in an eccentric enough fashion, yet in a fashion by no means so foolish as it looked. He went to the agent whose name appeared on the boards announcing the vacancy of the bijou villa, and from him ascertained the address of the landlord. That personage told him that the departure of Mrs. Levison had been occasioned by ill-health, which, she had informed him, necessitated change of climate, and that she was going to the South of France for six months.

The South of France was a somewhat vague address. Müller inquired if her daughter had accompanied her. The landlord, who apparently had enjoyed a good deal of Mrs. Levison's confidence, replied in the affirmative. In fact both her daughters had gone with her, to the best of his belief. The rich young lady, Miss Levison, and Miss Ormatroyd.

So far satisfied, Müller next procured Miss Levison's former address in Maida Vale, and departed thither to make further inquiries.

He found that aristocratic mansion shut up and temporarily abandoned, and the slip-shod domestic in care of it could only inform him that the "family was all abroad." Being asked for a more definite description of their whereabouts, she further stated

they were "in furrin' parts," but believed there was a card somewhere in the house with their address, for letters to be sent on.

After a bribe and some cajolery on Müller's part, the said card was unearthed, and proved the last address given to be, "Post Restante, Cannes."

Content with this, the old German took his way back to his hotel, meditating gravely as to what he should do next. The result of his meditations consisted in a letter to Noel Hill, and his departure that same night by the tidal express for Paris. He had resolved to find Sheba, and tell her with his own lips the mingled good and bad news of which she was as yet unconscious.

He hated travelling. It upset the whole routine of his life, and the long fatiguing journey was in no way recompensed by the beauty of scenery, or the mildness of climate on which his fellow-travellers lavished such eulogiums. But he had sternly resolved to go through with the task he had set himself, and nothing would have turned him from his purpose. If by any trouble or suffering on his own part he could have brought one gleam of joy or peace to Sheba Ormatroyd—he would have spared himself nothing of such trouble nor counted the cost of such sufferings.

No one looking at the grim face, the shaggy brows, or noting the gruff bearish manner of the old man, would have deemed he had a heart as tender as a woman's—a patience as untiring.

Since he had heard that Sheba Ormatroyd lived he had longed to see her again, but yet a dread and terror of doing so had prevented any such attempt on his part. Now he only thought how welcome a messenger he would appear to her—that he would be able to say, "Your trials are over at last. Stand fast in joy as you have in grief, oh tried and trusting heart!"

So the train sped on, and Lyons and Marseilles were left behind, and the beautiful blue Mediterranean gleamed and danced in the sparkling sunlight; and picturesque villages and smiling pastures showed themselves under the white arms of the sheltering Alps. The air was balmy and delicious, the sky without a cloud. But the grim old face looking out at it all, neither changed nor softened, and when he at last alighted at his destination his fellow-passengers exchanged opinions that were for once unanimous, and proclaimed the poor old professor a "perfect German bear."

The bear meanwhile had himself driven to an hotel, and set himself to make inquiries as to the visitors at the little town.

It was some time before he succeeded in discovering what he wanted, through the medium of published lists in the local journals, but at last, after wading through names innumerable, he came upon the following announcement:

“Villa Napoule—

“Mrs. and Miss Lévison,

“Miss Ormatroyd,

“Mrs. Matthew Lévy and friends.”

He felt a thrill of triumph—he had discovered them at last. He rubbed his hands, and consulted the clock, and finally decided to start off for the Villa Napoule that very evening, as soon as he had had some refreshment.

“I shall see perhaps the mother—that terrible mother. *Ja!* That will be amusing, and I shall give her my mind at last—in one piece. It will do her good—she has been always bully-bully all her life long. Well, it is time that she finds some other can also be bully-bully, and tell her plain to her face what one really thinks.”

He was ignorant enough and foolish enough, this good Müller, to actually believe that any one of Mrs. Levison's character could possibly be convinced of errors, or faults, or shortcomings against a personal conviction that they are immaculate.

It showed how little experience he had had of women, or else that women of such unusual perfections were not often met with.

Be this as it may, the old professor ate his dinner with the zest of one conscious he was fortifying himself for a great enterprise, and then hiring a carriage by way of expediting his journey and assisting the speedy discovery of the Villa Napoule, he set out on his quest.

The villa was reached through ascending olive groves, and stood in beautifully sheltered grounds to the west of the Boulevard Cannel. Müller descended and inquired for Miss Ormatroyd. The footman, a young Italian who spoke very imperfect English, showed him straightway into a small room on the ground floor where a middle-aged lady was reclining in a low easy-chair before a fire. She held Müller's card in her hand, and favoured him with an austere bend of the head, and a stony glare which somewhat discomposed him.

"I—it is to Miss Ormatroyd I have the desire to pay my respects, madame," he murmured apologetically.

"I am Miss Ormatroyd's mother," said the lady. "She is out at present. You may leave any message for her with me."

"I would rather wait and see her—if it incommodes not madame," said the old professor. "She and I are old friends. It is long since we have met. I am the bearer of good news—excellent news. It is not unnatural that I should wish to convey it of my own person."

"I can scarcely believe in any news being good that concerns my unlucky daughter," said Mrs. Levison with an air of ghostly gloom that, to say the least of it, was dispiriting. "But I have never been the confidante of her secrets. That—" with a majestic wave of her hand—"is reserved for strangers and aliens. But I have learnt to be resigned—to put myself on one side, as it were. I do not request to know your business, sir, though as the mother of Miss Ormatroyd I have every right to do so. You are at liberty to wait."

"I thank you, madame," said the old German courteously. He took a chair and attentively regarded the austere and forbidding countenance before him, pursuing in his own mind the devious curves and windings in that curious chain of heredity which can link diverse natures in ties so close.

Mrs. Levison grew uncomfortable beneath the silent scrutiny of those strange eyes. Besides, she was consumed with curiosity to know the old German's errand. "Are you visiting Cannes, may I ask?" she at last demanded.

"*Nein*—I mean no; I have but to-day arrived. I came from England. I had much trouble to find you—but it is accomplished. I am here."

He nodded vigorously, as much as to say,

"And I remain here till my business is concluded."

Mrs. Levison gave a dignified shiver, and drew near the fire. "My health necessitated my leaving England for the winter," she said. "I am not aware that there was any particular mystery about it. Fortunately my relatives recognized the necessity for carrying out the instructions of my medical adviser, and as my sister-in-law had never visited the South of France, it was arranged that we should all winter here. We have quite a large circle of friends around us, and the next villa to this which we occupy has

been taken for the season by some very dear friends of mine. We expect them from Paris next week—the Count and Countess Pharamond.”

“*Potzblitz!* What say you?” exclaimed Müller, jumping up from his chair in great agitation. “Pharamond?—they to come here! Oh, I think not—I think not. Strange things have happened. He is a villain, that count. *Ach!* You will know—you will hear—it will be one great scandal that he goes to make.”

“Sir!” exclaimed Mrs. Levison indignantly. “The count is a personal friend of mine. I have the highest respect for him and his wife. Your insinuations must be explained and substantiated.”

Müller ruffled his iron-grey hair in perplexity. “I do not go about carrying such—what you call substantives—in my pocket. I—you must excuse that I speak so badly. I have not spoke English much of late years, and it comes not so easy as it did when I was in Australia, and met first your daughter.”

“If quite agreeable to yourself, Herr Müller,” interposed Mrs. Levison frigidly, “I would rather *not* speak of that time, or its painful consequences. It was not with *my* sanction that my daughter took upon herself the menial duties of an instructor of youth. My advice was not listened to. I regret that this headstrong and selfish girl has ever refused to be guided by such advice. Strangers appeared to have a baneful influence over her, and only when deserted and cast off by every one did she appeal to the love and shelter she had so thoughtlessly forsaken. So it has ever been; so it is, I regret to say, even at the present moment. Strangers apparently”—with a malignant glance at the professor—“are entirely in her confidence. Her mother is left out in the cold entirely. It has ever been my fate, and I have borne it uncomplainingly. I trust I shall do so till the end.”

“Pardon, madame,” broke in the old German, rather puzzled and confused by this harangue. “But really, as you must know, I am well acquainted with the circumstances that led to your daughter’s being employed by my friend, now Lord Amersley. They were not—if you will excuse—not circumstances to reflect credit on her parents. I do not hold, madame, that parentage gives the right of tyranny. Reason, argue, persuade, but do not force. Every parent should study its child’s nature, and so

accordingly guide and educate it. Sheba, she had a fine nature warped and misunderstood from childhood. She——"

"Sir," cried Mrs. Levison furiously, "are you aware that you are casting imputations on her *mother*—that you are accusing me of being incapable of educating and bringing up my own child?"

"Exactly," said the old professor, nodding his head with perfect contentment. "You have, what you call, grasped the situation. Madame, listen; I will explain. It is not great philosophy; it is simple fact. Nature makes parents of human beings as well as of animals, but it is not every human being that has the mind or feeling to be a parent—a wise or a good one. No, hear me out—I will not offend, It is not your fault; it is not nature's. She fulfils one law; you another. But the fault is there, and much harm comes because it is not recognized. It is just like the foolish social restrictions that say, 'Speak not of vice; it does not exist in a civilized land, or in cultured circles, or if it does exist we must pretend it is not there.' But it *is* there, and every man and woman knows it, and because they are forbidden to speak and stamp it publicly with its own shame, so it spreads and spreads, and twines its poisonous branches round every good as well as every evil that it finds. I weary you. *Ja wohl*. I conclude. I say all people are not meant to be parents save in the physical sense of the word, and it is as much a crime to make a child unhappy, and ruin its nature, and oppose its instincts, and force its mental abilities into a wrong groove, as if you murdered it outright. For it *is* murder that you commit—murder of the nature that you should have studied, of the gifts you should have fostered, of the temperament and disposition that might have been of benefit to humanity; murder of that frail and delicate and complex mechanism, which you treat as ignorance can alone treat what is above its comprehension."

He had grown so excited that his language, as was often the case, became almost eloquent, and Mrs. Levison had been, despite her growing indignation, compelled to listen.

But then of course it is one thing to listen, another to agree. She was not likely to accept such heresies as those of the old professor, or refute all the theories and beliefs of her previous life at his bidding.

Turning her wrathful eyes upon the offender, and wrapping

herself once more in that cloak of self-satisfaction and self-approbation, which she never parted with, she demanded severely:

"Permit me to ask, Herr Professor, were you ever a parent yourself?"

The old German shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly.

"Madame, I am happy to say it—no."

"Then," said Mrs. Levison with an air of triumph, disdainful of further argument, "do not ever again speak to a *mother* of the duties of motherhood. A theory, my good professor, is very different to a fact."

The old man looked at her from under his shaggy brows, thoughtfully, wonderingly. There she sat, immovable—the embodiment of that fact she had stated; the personal representation of its hard and sterile truisms; self-satisfied that she had accepted it and understood it in its widest instead of its narrowest sense; self-confident in her own obstinate persistence in the lines she had laid down from the first; not to be argued with, not to be convinced, not to be shaken—a living and by no means singular example of wilful blindness—a character capable of doing more harm by believing it was doing only good, than many a weaker and less confident one.

Müller read her like a book, and sighed as he came to the end of the page so triumphantly exposed for his perusal.

When Pilate of Jerusalem asked the Christ, "What is truth?"—He might have answered: "The one thing in the world that no one will believe, or accept."

CHAPTER VI.

DAWN AND DARKNESS.

THE sound of a light step, the sudden opening of the door, and arguments, and theories, and philosophy fell like scattered cards around him, as Müller turned and saw the tall slender figure, the sad, pale face that had so long lived in his memory.

"Sheba! *Liebe Sheba! Willkommen! . . . Ach Herrgott!* How are you altered—what a change!"

There were tears in the fierce old eyes as he looked at her, as he held in his the thin trembling hands and kissed them again and again. As for Sheba, she was too astonished to speak.

It seemed a miracle to see this old strange man once more,

and to see him *here*. He did not wait for her to speak; he poured forth broken words and explanations in a mingled stream of German and English, and his eloquence and incoherence so bewildered Mrs. Levison that at last she rose from her seat, and remarking austere,ly, "I will not intrude upon your visitor's confidence, Sheba," sailed from the room.

Müller hailed her departure with unconcealed delight.

"Now, *meine Liebe*, we are to ourselves, and free. I have much, very much to tell you. But first answer me: Why have you behaved so strangely? Why did you never write? Why did you not let my poor distracted Paul know where you were to be found?"

Sheba had grown very pale. She took the seat her mother had vacated, and for a moment tried vainly to speak.

"Tell me first," she said in a low shaken voice, "are you here by Paul's desire, and with his knowledge?"

"But yes, certainly I am," exclaimed Müller. "He is heart-broken, ill, distracted, as I before said. For months you have not answered his letters, for——"

"Stop!" cried the girl impetuously. "Do you know what you are saying? For *months* I have had no letters to answer."

Müller stared at her, wondering and incredulous.

"How comes that? I myself know he wrote—I have been living there under his roof—and no word, no reply. He told me so at last when he came back from London after his vain search for you. Sheba, *was ist denn?* There is some mystery—some dark plot in the background. Let us inquire into it. Begin—I attend."

"For a long time," said the girl, sadly and slowly, "I heard nothing at all from Paul. His letters ceased quite suddenly. I thought little of it at first; I heard he was entertaining a large party at Heronsmere, and I did not wish to force myself on his notice; so I waited. Then I fell ill, and the doctors advised me to winter out of England, as they feared for my lungs. My mother was also recommended change of scene, and so we gave up our house and came here. That is all, I think. I always told Paul I would not seek his notice. I—I thought he might have changed . . . he might regret . . . Men do—so often."

He saw the great tears rise, and fall upon her clasped hands; he looked at the slender, shadowy figure, the worn pathetic

young face, and his heart ached for her. He told himself he had not come here one hour too soon.

"Yes, *meine Liebe*, men change, but not such men as Paul. He has never forgotten, never ceased to love you. Do not wrong him by a doubt. Do you know what took him to London to search for you? Do you know what well-nigh broke his heart when he could not find you? But no, of course you do not. One always believes in misfortunes, rarely in happiness; I think—I am sure, dear child—that there is happiness for you at last. Listen—let me hold your hands. How white and cold you are. Can you not be brave to bear good fortune—you have had so much that is evil? Sheba, Paul is unchanged, and Paul is—free. Does your heart say the rest?"

"Free!" . . . It was only a stifled whisper, the first cry of joy incredulous of its very bliss. Then she sank at Müller's feet, weeping as if her heart would break.

The old man grew alarmed. He could not understand how passionate a revulsion of feeling, what burden of sorrow long borne, of hope long deferred, of pain long nourished, those wild sobs and unchecked tears betrayed. Free, oh, blessed word—too blessed to be yet relieved! Free to stand by his side beloved and honoured—to know the cruel past forgotten—the sad, cold present changed as by a sorcerer's wand.

Free! Nay, let her weep. Such tears are nature's best relief to a heart so tried, a life so troubled, a trust so noble as hers.

* * * * *

The tempest of emotion spent itself at last. Then Müller heard of the mystery of those lost letters, and wondered no longer that pride had kept her silent. Her secret enemy had known her character well enough before testing it. He on his side told of Paul's sudden deliverance from bondage, and how without an hour's delay he had rushed off to find her and tell her of that release. He kept in the background for a time the disastrous consequences of that visit and Paul's present dilemma. He had not the heart to damp her joy, or the courage to whisper, even faintly, that fate had not yet exhausted its powers of ill.

"Let her have one night of happiness," he said; "she has been without it so long—so cruelly long."

And when she had grown calm and he had again and again

renewed his assurance that all would now be well, and that she was not to mind her mother's unkindness or her domestic troubles any longer, he at last took his leave.

Her face was so glad and radiant, yet withal had so touching a look of chastened sorrow—of endurance long lived—that to him it seemed far more beautiful and interesting than he had ever deemed it.

He raised her hand to his lips with something almost of remorse in his eyes.

"You are sure," she said, distrustful still of joy, so long it had been a stranger to her heart—"you are sure, dear Müller, that I may trust—may hope? I am so afraid to be too sure."

"You may be as sure as you please now," he said, "and Paul will tell you so himself ere many days are over."

"I would rather keep it to myself till then," she said timidly. "I mean I will say nothing here—they are so strange. I think they would not even be glad! so I will say nothing until Paul comes. It is better he should tell them."

"I think you are right," said the old German. Yet his heart sank within him. If Paul should not come? . . . If any new misfortune should have happened?

He knew then that it would have been better a thousand times to have left Sheba in ignorance of what "freedom" promised, than to dash the cup of joy from her lips ere she had stooped to taste its coveted nectar.

* * * *

Dinner was long over when Sheba at last appeared. The family conclave were assembled in the drawing-room of the villa, and one and all were in a state of frantic curiosity—Mrs. Levison by no means the least sufferer from that feminine complaint.

As the girl entered the room, every eye turned to her.

It was impossible not to notice the suppressed but intense happiness of her face, the radiance of her eyes, the light and warmth and colour that replaced her usual pallor and melancholy.

Dolly Levison's heart gave a quick throb of fear. "Can she have heard anything? Has she found us out?" she thought, and then pretended absorbing interest in a book while leaving the field free for the manœuvres of the other members of the family. But her keen ears were on the alert, and not a word that passed between them was unnoticed by her.

Mrs. Levison naturally opened the campaign.

"Am I," she asked with dignity, "to be informed of the reason of this foreign person's visit to my daughter? I do not insist—I merely ask. Also I cannot refrain from requesting that such visitors may in future be informed of the dinner hour, so as not to interfere with the arrangements of the household."

"Oh, we did not wait for you, Sheba," said Mrs. Matthew good-naturedly. "I told them to keep something hot, and that you would have it after your visitor had left."

"Thank you," said Sheba, "but I don't want any dinner. I am glad you did not wait."

"You appear to have dined off your foreign friend's news," said her mother. "It must have been of a very satisfactory nature."

"Yes," said Sheba colouring softly, "it was. I am sorry I am not at liberty to speak about it yet, but it concerns—another person."

"Oh, pray keep your mysteries and secrets to yourself as you've always done," snapped Mrs. Levison. "I have been too long used to be a stranger to my daughter's confidence to mind it now. I will not say that in *my* day it was considered a duty for a child to tell its parents everything; neither will I allude to my own behaviour to my dear mother, poor departed saint. No, *my* ideas of duty are of course all wrong in this advanced age, in which, I am informed, a parent is to *study* the management of a child, and be ruled and guided by that child's whims and fancies. I must be excused for disagreeing with such opinions. I have had only Christian principles to act as my guide, and the example of my own sainted parents. I have endeavoured to do my duty. I can say no more, though it is hard to hear from a stranger's lips that I have never even understood the obligations of a parent."

"What a lot of nonsense you are talking, mamma," interposed Dolly petulantly. "Who on earth has been telling you about your duties? Not any one who knew you, I should say."

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Levison, taking her own view of the remark—"not, I am happy to say, any one who *knew* me. That pleads the only possible excuse. It is this foreign friend of Sheba's who took the liberty of informing me that I had not comprehended the duties of a parent, for which piece of ignorant impertinence I have no doubt to thank my daughter."

"No, mother," said Sheba quietly. "I neither knew of his visit nor its purport. I have not seen him since I—since we came to England."

Dolly looked at her sharply.

She would have given a great deal to know the reason of this mysterious visit. An odd uncomfortable feeling came over her as she noted the quiet content of her step-sister's face—the radiance of the soft glad eyes; and yet what was there to be discovered?

Mrs. Levison only answered Sheba's vindication by a contemptuous smile, as who should say, "Do you expect *me* to believe that?"

In hopes of turning the conversation Sheba took a chair near her mother, and said in a low voice, which, however did not escape Dolly's sharp ears:

"I have a question to ask you, mother. Have you any idea where Mary went to on leaving us? You gave her a character, I know. Do you happen to remember the lady's name or address?"

Dolly Levison grew red and white by turns. Engrossed as she was in her book, her hands trembled so that she could not turn a leaf. Had it come at last? Was the blow to fall now? Oh, to be able to give her step-mother a hint how to answer.

Mrs. Levison apparently found some difficulty in detaching her mind from the impertinent foreigner and allowing it to take up the concerns of her former maid-of-all-work, with whom, indeed, she had parted on what is popularly known as "bad terms."

As she rarely gave a direct answer to any question unless it nearly concerned herself, she indulged in a considerable amount of fencing and "beating about the bush," which delighted Dolly, perplexed Sheba, and in no way furthered the result of the girl's question.

"My dear mother," she spoke out at last, fairly losing her patience, "what does it matter now how many pounds of tea she used, or whether she gave beer to her young man? If you don't know where she is—well, there's no more to be said; if you do, I should be glad to hear it. I wish to ask her a few questions about some letters which never reached me. You know the letter-box was attached to the gate, and Mary always used to

fetch them in. It is very extraordinary that I never received those I mentioned. I intend to inquire into the matter."

Again Dolly's face changed, but Sheba was not looking at her. It would never have occurred to her to suspect her step-sister. What possible interest could Dolly have had in her correspondence with Paul?

Mrs. Levison, now fairly roused to interest, went full tilt into the charge. She was not surprised; she had always suspected Mary's principles, and girls who took up with soldiers were never any good. How often had she told Sheba she was too ready to trust people?—how often had she advised a key to the letter-box? but of course *her* advice was never heeded. People always knew better—even foreigners who took snuff and were little better than atheists in their principles!

Sheba gave it up in despair. It seemed impossible to wade to the dry land of result through these deep waters of speculation, accusation, and prevarication, in which Mrs. Levison appeared inclined to flounder for the rest of the evening.

Dolly came to the rescue at last. "What a fuss about a servant," she said impatiently. "Is it that stuck-up Mary you're talking of, mamma? I never thought much of her, and how she could dress as she did out of the wages you gave was a mystery to me. However, I thought she was perfection in your eyes; but your servants were always saints when they came, and sinners when they left."

This was so true that it hurt Mrs. Levison's feelings, and brought down vials of wrath on Dolly's head. However, as that astute young lady had an object in view, she did not at all mind this present distraction. Sheba gave up the point, and let Dolly and her mother fight their battles anew, which they did with no small zeal and fervour.

Mrs. Matthew Levy attempted to throw oil on the troubled waters, but without success.

The truth is that Dolly Levison was growing worse tempered every day. She had so long been spoilt and pampered that her natural faults and disposition had increased, and the whole household dreaded and disliked her. She never manifested the least respect or consideration for her step-mother, and that much-tried person had at last learnt in what supreme indifference she was held by the spoilt girl. It was not pleasant either

to her affection or her vanity, and whenever they had a dispute now, Dolly manifested a sharpness of repartee and a power of seizing upon any weakness and any failing of Mrs. Levison's, that drove that estimable lady nearly beside herself with rage.

Sheba withdrew from the skirmish unperceived, and shut herself up in her own room to indulge once more in those bygone dreams of happiness that had so long been lain aside.

What a tender, chastened happiness it was that now filled her soul; a something widely different from that passionate, all-absorbing love of her romantic girlhood; and yet that love was its very root and essence. But it was accepted now with humble heart and reverent gratitude, a gift of which her life was all unworthy, and yet a gift which the unending gratitude of that life could but ill repay.

The hope of being Paul's wife, of knowing her place in his home, her hold on his heart and life at once assured and honoured, made her love no more sacred or proud a thing than of yore—it only invested it with a new and rare humility.

The feelings that her child's birth had awakened, had never died out of her memory. They had taught her that womanhood—even in the noblest height of self-sacrifice—has no right to dispose of itself at the cost of another life.

That feeling had kept her safe from any further tempting of Paul's, despite the force and strength of her love for him. And now, as in the hushed darkness of the night she knelt at her casement and looked out with dim wet eyes at the shining stars, she felt that the sorrows of her girlhood and the trials of past years were all swept away into insignificance by this new and holy joy.

She wronged Paul by no doubts. She forbore even to ask why he had not brought the welcome news himself. He would explain all in good time; she could trust him as herself.

She forgot the pain of absence and silence; the slow torture of hope deferred. An enemy's hand had been at work, but it had not triumphed; and in the first hour of his freedom his one thought had been of her.

She began to calculate how long it would be before she would see him, before his voice would again sound in her ears, and he would hold her to his heart and call her that blessed name which

now no one could forbid her—wife! Tears of joy and gratitude thronged to her eyes.

"What can I render thee, O princely giver?" she cried in her heart, and it seemed as if all the devotion and all the love and all the unchanging constancy of her whole life were but poor and worthless in exchange for what his love had bestowed on her.

Now that freedom had come—that hope was almost certainty—it seemed too good to be really true. She was afraid, even while she dwelt with reverent joy upon all it promised.

If anything should happen now?

Her heart seemed to cease beating as that thought touched it with a chilling sense of possible misfortune. And yet—she asked herself—what *could* happen? He loved her—he would be with her as soon as sea and rail could bring him, and then there would be no more parting—no more fear on this side the grave.

She rose to her feet at last and lit the candles, and let down her long rich hair to her feet, and gazed distrustfully and disapprovingly at herself.

"If I were only beautiful—for his sake," she thought; "and yet he never seemed to think about my looks. And he himself is so handsome Oh, my love—my true, devoted noble husband!"

She saw the reflection in the glass blush softly beneath its dusky veil. Did she see also what so few women believe, what so many men *know*, that there is a beauty of sense and soul—a something whose spell one voice, one look, one love alone may waken—that is far beyond the mere outline of feature, or the mere perfection of colouring? The woman who possesses it—in a man's eyes—needs no other charm; she is fairer to him than any rival could imagine, or she herself believe.

So in hushed and happy slumbers Sheba Ormatroyd passed that night, unknowing of further misfortune, undreaming of further evil.

But the morning was yet young when the wires were flashing back a message of ill-omen to that which Müller dispatched the previous night

"I cannot see her. Tell her all. I have not courage."

PAUL."

The old German sat with the slip of paper in his hand, his brows knitted in fierce anger, his heart hot with honest indignation. "What has come to him—what does he then mean?" he muttered again and again. "It is cruel; it is cowardly. What is that other woman to him? Why should a false notion of honour keep him now from Sheba's side? The fault was not his."

"I must tell her . . . She will judge for herself; only she is so proud and sensitive, and women—even the best and tenderest of women—become pitiless when they hear of a rival. Paul, *mein Freund*, I am not pleased with you; you disappoint me. You had best have pleaded your own case with this great, loving trustful heart . . . I pray you may not lose it now."

(*To be concluded.*)

Reminiscences of New Zealand during the Maori War of 1860.

I HAVE been asked by my husband and children to write the personal reminiscences of a few years of my life spent in New Zealand—these years being those of that miserable Maori outbreak commencing in 1860, and I have yielded somewhat against my will, for does not that time revive painful memories, and cause at least a dipping into old letters of those of whom three are now dead? Well, we went out to New Zealand in 1859, full of bright anticipation. Three brothers were there before us—had speculated in land in our father's name. He, an overworked London physician, thought of New Zealand, its climate and coming rest, as of an El Dorado. We were a family of six children, ranging in age from three to fourteen, numbering eight, with the dear father and mother. If sorrow filled our hearts at the many sad farewells, there was hope in the looked-for reunion in New Zealand. Then we had just buried a dearly-loved girl, my one remaining sister, and a change, a break, we felt was good for all. The father was the doctor of the ship, a comfortable sailing vessel. A family whom we had known for years emigrated with us as steerage passengers. For years one or more daughters out of this family had lived with us as servants, and they could not part from us. Strange, sorrow had just touched them, but oh! so bitterly. A daughter was accidentally shot by a brother. A gun bought for use in New Zealand, foolishly played with, was the cause. Our dear mother, in gentle administrations to her humble friend, was roused from *her* grief.

Voyages in those days were very long and tedious. We were four months in reaching Auckland, the then capital of New Zealand, and after a delay of three weeks were shipped on board a coasting brig for our destination, Taranaki (New Plymouth). We reached New Plymouth in ten days. To describe the joyous welcome from our absent ones would be impossible. Two had

been in New Zealand three years, one a year; fine, tall, stalwart fellows they were, varying in age from nineteen to twenty-two. Well, our home was literally in "the Bush." I write, remember, of thirty years ago. The country was only explored four miles behind the house, which stood on an elevation five miles from the coast and twenty miles from town. The district was called "Tartaraimaka"—a small colony of English farmers, the gentleman class and the ordinary farming. I think I have never seen more beautiful scenery than that by which we were surrounded, flanked by Mount Egmont with its perpetual snow-cap, the higher and lower "ranges" (hills), one hill (or mountain) covered with the "rata" tree, which bears clusters of scarlet flowers.

The trees in front of the house were felled, while at the back "our boys" had cut foot-paths, as the bush was almost impassable otherwise, owing to the growth of "supple-jack"—nay, I remember, when a spirit of adventure seized me, begging a brother to clear the way and push on into isolated regions. This pushing on required a tomahawk or bill-hook in constant use. Not only were one's steps impeded by "supple-jack," but by a bush thorn called by the settlers "the lawyer." This bush clung to one, never leaving hold without damage to dress or skin. Sometimes we came to naturally-cleared nooks, with large trees—pines of a towering height, grass, lichens and flowering creepers adding to the beautiful effect: again, to groves of the silver and gold tree fern. Birds, unaccustomed to the human species, were quite tame; owls would almost allow one to touch them. How I delighted in these bush rambles. Near home the father beautified the land, planting flower gardens; he had sent out seeds before from England, as well as several hundred fruit-bearing trees. Then he transplanted three hundred young native trees, and as everything grows so fast in that glorious climate, our home soon looked very pretty and flourishing. I spoke of birds; apart from the "bell bird," which has a musical note, or notes, I do not remember being attracted by their song. The plumage of some is very pretty, notably the paroquet, a tiresome, mischievous little bird, very destructive to the growth of wheat, and in my day having to be *taught* fright!

Well, life glided on. Books, work, riding, &c., an occasional visit, varied by visitors at our house. A church was being built. During its progress, service was held in a private house centrally

placed, a clergyman punctually attending each Sunday afternoon, while a Dissenting service, alternately by different missionaries, was held in another house on Sunday morning, the preachers of each denomination arranging their hours so as not to clash, and you would see the same faces at each—all was harmony.

I hardly remember when first rumours reached us of coming trouble of war, but we smiled at our three eldest boys being drafted into a volunteer corps and presented with rifles, the mother complimented on her soldierly-looking sons, and the father coaxed into being a militia surgeon. Did we young ones think it a pretty farce? Perhaps so. The mother, looking at the rifles one day, said, "Please God, I may never see them in use." Her prayer was answered, for God took her suddenly while rumours were thickening and faces growing more and more anxious. Then the utter loneliness of our home. It was hard to *feel* a merciful Father's hand, but ere long we thanked God that the gentle, timid, loving mother *was* taken. As weeks passed it became apparent that the Maories were changing somewhat in their manner to us, in many instances proving very insolent, and requiring much forbearance. I remember being quite alone in the house on one occasion, when a burly-looking native sneaked in and asked me for bread, which I at once gave, then because I would not let him forage the dairy and pantry at his will, threatened to tomahawk me. The rifles were always kept loaded on a rack. In a moment one was in my hand, with vows of using the same unless he left the house at once. My father appeared at this moment, or I shudder to think what *might* have happened. The house was never again left unprotected. Rifle practice was vigorously carried on about this time, under efficient officers, whilst "our boys" privately practised also, I frequently acting as loader. "Our boys" were soon known as experts. I remember seeing a hawk pounce upon one of my chickens and soar off with it; a brother with his rifle brought down the hawk dead, and the chicken alive!

At the commencement of the year 1860, I left home to spend some weeks with friends at Omata, a village about four miles from town. Between Tartaraimaka and Omata the land was in the hands of the natives. Our little colony was bounded on either side by Maori villages. Omata was then a flourishing village, containing in its district some well-cultivated estates,

homes of genuine English refinement. My stay was a short one, for one could at last realize the approaching Nemesis. My girl friends and I returning from a ride one evening found a state of nervous excitement not easy to describe. My host had called off all hands and cut crops, and we at once set to work to unsaddle our horses, &c., my first experience, and a terrible bungler I proved; but, oh! light-hearted youth! we laughed at fears, I merry over my friends' jokes of "bungling London fingers," teased about "eccentric fears," when the grave-looking owner of the pretty flourishing homestead came in. Ah me! but the next morning a brother came to fetch me home. What a ride that was! An indescribable oppression seized me; fording rivers, galloping on the beach, nothing shook it off; was it a prescience of what was to follow? "Our boys" were now busy digging a large cave to bury articles in, getting in crops, barricading the house, and waiting for orders. Volunteers were now enrolled in a militia corps, our father placed at the head of a staff of ten medical men. Unfortunately I scalded my foot at this momentous time, which rendered me almost helpless and doubly anxious.

In February, late one evening, a Maori came begging our father to go with him to visit a chief's son, the only surviving son out of six, and dying from consumption. How I begged of father not to go, but he had always been as ready to give medical aid to Maories as to English, and went. Feeble in health and suffering, I became almost delirious before the father returned. You will learn how little we poor mortals can foresee.

As time went on the town was put under martial law, "our boys" nightly lying on their rifles, and during the day steadily sending valuables into town, while waiting for military orders.

One night in March, a Maori crept into the house, and in a hurried whisper said: "To-morrow eight hundred natives will be upon you; fly for your lives. I am sent by the chief whose son was ill. Warn friends." He then crawled out as he had come. What a night was that! We sent a messenger to our nearest neighbours, who carried it on to others, and warned the garrison; worked burying in our cave, it being much too late now to save the remaining valuables in any other way. My beautiful Newfoundland dog was shot. Have you ever been made to feel

numbed with trouble, that at last pain almost ceases? What could we do with a dog in the garrison? As daylight came I put my foot into a sling, and hopped to our mother's grave—she was buried on our land—the “little ones” following, “baby” clinging to my hand; one little fellow in a passion of tears: “Thank God, darling, *you* are safe.” We turned our cattle loose; six were milking cows, beautiful animals, and as tame as lambs. Then after a hurried breakfast we started, our conveyance a bullock cart; roads in those days were unmacadamized, winding up and down cliffs, over stretches of sand, and crossing rivers without bridges. Apart from horse-riding the bullock cart was the best conveyance. The cart was supplied with mattress and bedding; I in my crippled state laid thereon on my back; “baby” in my arms, the other children in turns riding and walking. When we reached a large farmhouse near the beach we found most of the men of our colony detained by military orders to defend and barricade. An officer had arrived to command, so two brothers were left behind, the father and one brother allowed to accompany us. Providentially, as it proved, this order a few hours later was countermanded, and the little garrison ordered into town. Shall we ever forget that day? The heat, dust, withal *terror*, as we passed the Maori possessions; the natives grouped about and armed, however, offered no molestation; on the contrary, women brought us peaches and melons to sell, and spoke gently to the little ones. Our cart was alone, our neighbours had fled in the night terror-stricken. At Omata we rested at an inn; all the houses were abandoned, and the innkeeper was just starting into town, but they kindly helped us in every way, carried me to a sofa, bathed my heated foot, and gave us a glorious tea; then on we pushed, finding every homestead deserted.

At last reaching a friend's house about two miles from town, we hoped to find they had not fled, for indeed, as the children said, “we could do no more;” besides the hour was then late, eleven o'clock, rendering it difficult to enter the garrison. We knocked and knocked at the S—'s house; all was still; no lights showed, so we concluded they, panic-stricken, had also gone, so determined to bivouac in the fern by the roadside. It was a moonlight night, we could see a lurid glare over Tartaraimaka, and *felt* the native conflagrations had commenced (as indeed was the case), most of the houses being burned to the ground, ours

one of the number. Early next morning we were preparing to march on, when to our surprise we saw the S—'s house open, they had not left, but, "fearing they knew not what," remained quiet. Mrs. S— wept over us, fretting at our sleeping out all night, took us in and comforted us with a good breakfast, and gathered a quantity of ripe fruit for the children. The S—'s were also in the bustle of leaving for town, having been warned to that effect. Arriving in the garrison, we found so little accommodation that we were glad to accept an invitation for three of our number (my two youngest brothers and myself) at a mission station, Mr. Whiteley's, situated about a mile from town, near the sea. This station was considered safe, as Mr. W. had laboured many years amongst the natives, was greatly respected by them, and then visited with impunity among the hostile tribes. Ah me! our good kind host was a few years later shot by the natives, when on a peace mission.

The W. family received us most kindly, and for three weeks our lives passed quietly enough. Troops were now constantly landing, some were encamped about twenty miles from town on the debatable land; the militia, about eight hundred, guarded the town day and night and escorted provisions to the camp. The escort was intercepted once, but a detachment of cavalry soon drove the natives off. Stockades were being built in the suburbs. Marines with cannon were encamped on two commanding hills; in all arrangements a determined defensive front was shown; telegraphic communications were opened between the garrison and the outlying stockades, &c., &c. But if *we* were on the defensive so also were the natives erecting "pahs" or stockades. Now these stockades are much more formidable than you might imagine. There are an immense number of isolated hills in New Zealand, generally precipitous cones or elongated mounds. The Maories cut away all the timber, fern, or other cover, and in an incredibly short time (for the women work as hard as the men) erect a fortification which cannot be taken even by cannon. These "pahs" are surrounded by palisades of immense trunks of trees in three or four circles, with deep trenches between, and pits to live in and fire from; when trunks are knocked down others are put in immediately, and if the place is attempted to be starved out they make subterranean passages and all escape some dark night. The Maories are for-

midable foes, and in former outbreaks have generally had the best of it.

And how were we getting on at the mission station? Living in daily, nay, almost *hourly*, uncertainty; hearing rumours; warned to fly the moment we heard two signal cannon fired from the barrack hill; occasionally walking into town, which was in a state of dire confusion; churches, chapels, storehouses, barns, unfinished buildings and private houses were seized upon by the military for night pickets. Families daily coming in from all isolated districts.

On the twenty-eighth of March, about mid-day, the signal cannon were fired; we were just sitting down to an early dinner. It was as though an electric shock had passed through us; each face was deathly-looking.

Simultaneously we rose. I hurried the little ones into town. "Fly, children, fly; don't wait for me!" putting tiny bundles of clothes into their arms. We all, the W—'s and I, followed so soon as we could collect a few things together, hurried in all our arrangements by a messenger on horseback from the garrison.

"For God's sake, fly! The Maories are upon us; five murders have been committed not far from you. We scarcely know friends from foes."

Indeed, all the natives at the mission station *had* gone a few hours before to join the rebels.

We ran into the garrison *en route*, coming upon traces of the frightened children, picking up odds and ends of their bundles, and eventually overtaking them. Together we were called into a house (relations of the W—'s), already filled to overflowing. I found the three eldest boys had been ordered out with a body of men to meet the enemy, heard it with a terrible heart-sickening. Troops had also left town, taking a different route from the militia and volunteers, but all were to meet and join at a certain point. The father was at the hospital, too busy to spare a moment for us.

Some hours after the march, at dusk, a messenger rode into the garrison bringing tidings. "The militia and volunteers were cut off from the troops; several were wounded, one desperately!" *that one* the youngest of our three "boys." It was impossible to send out more men as the garrison was then poorly protected. Ah! what a night was that! An attack on the town

being dreaded, orders were issued to be on the alert. Our friends had made temporary sleeping arrangements for our party in a small sitting-room, the only one room unoccupied. I had just put the tired little ones to bed, when the rousing order came, and amidst fretful cries, re-dressed them. Many women, panic-stricken, fled to the barracks for protection. One poor creature there gave birth to an infant—poor wee one launched into strange surroundings indeed. The father was ordered out with carts and appliances for the wounded, but saw no traces of the volunteers and militia. Flying messengers spoke of the whole body having been cut off. "Hoping against hope" that the men had returned by a different route, the father came back. Meanwhile the troops with the larger proportion of volunteers and militia had returned, but *not* "our boys." Judge of the excitement we, the mothers, wives, sisters and some "nearer and dearer ones," felt; how we rushed to see who *had* come back! The cries and sobs of those who had none to welcome! The father now begged for a hundred men, and again set out at about eleven at night, this time coming up with a number of poor fellows, stragglers, and pushed on to the Omata stockade (near where the battle was fought), finding here many wounded men, but not our missing ones. The commanding officer declined to proceed farther. "The roads were infested and their protection insufficient." Again a return. Towards morning two of our missing "boys" came home with a few other stragglers, whom we had supposed dead, and bringing word our wounded boy had been carried into the stockade. We took courage and thanked God. The father described "the boys" coming back to me. He said: "With a strange morbid feeling I hurried from the hospital towards dawn to the room so recently occupied by them, where were traces of their having been hurried off, the unfinished meal all just as they left it. An agony of soul came over me, and I bowed my head on my arms in a passion of sobs. 'My sons, my sons!' when I heard feeble voices saying, 'Father, father, we are here!' and looking up saw two strangely altered figures, so worn, torn and wretched-looking, but—they were my sons." They with a party of three had been placed at an outpost, and, failing to hear the bugles signalling a recall, had remained until a poor fugitive warned them they were alone, and with miraculous escapes, drag-

ging a wounded man between them, managed to reach the garrison.

Let me mention here the brave conduct noticed by the commanding officer of these five was warmly commented upon.

To proceed. The following morning the father went to the Omata stockade, and brought in our poor wounded boy, whom we found terribly exhausted from loss of blood, having been five hours without medical assistance. It seems the fighting was hardest where he fell, and his mental agony, "lest the natives should take him," extreme. He implored his comrades "to kill him should they feel the attack too strong!" Poor boy, he knew what that would mean, for the natives tortured with a savage intensity. His right thigh was shot through by a rifle ball, and the bone shattered, a wound which, eventually, kept him nine months in bed, fifteen months before he could walk, and then with crutches for many weary months following. Unfit for active life he was afterwards appointed on General Cameron's staff as correspondent and Maori interpreter. Even during "that terrible night" several comic incidents occurred. Here are two.

A girl, whom we will call Annie, taking refuge in the same house with us, spoke incessantly of "the bravery of her engaged" —Fred was *pro tem.* in the militia corps. Annie, wringing her hands: "He has the soul of a lion," "He will *rush* up to the enemy and be killed—oh! oh!" I sympathizing deeply. While mingling our tears a sound was heard outside the door: "Annie, I am here!" A rush, an embrace, then, in calmer moments, "Why here?" "I *could not* face the Maories!" This "couldn't face" nearly cost Fred his life.

The other incident. The sentries kept up their monotonous cry for some hours of "No. 1!" "All's well," &c., &c., making night hideous, when suddenly a panic, a shout, a cry, "The Maories are upon us!" A sentry had heard stealthy footsteps, and shot a *calf*!

It was in the midst of all these troubles and anxieties that the two little ones and I left for Nelson, a southern province of New Zealand. I must mention that the Nelson government had sent steamers from time to time offering homes in their province to the women and children and weakly men—nobly done!—chargeable to their expense in needed cases, and offering first-class free passages to those who would not burden the govern-

ment. I was anxious and unhappy at the thought of leaving, but the father urged it, "if only for a month," "while he had time to look round."

The expected steamer arrived early in April, a blowy, tempestuous day. A few hurried lines reached me from the father, telling me to go, naming several families leaving at the same time, and inclosing letters of introduction. All was so sudden, but I felt I must say good-bye to the wounded brother, so, wrongly I suppose, succeeded in evading a sentinel, and saw him for a few seconds. So shocked was I at the change that it required an effort to keep calm. The father was out on duty, but, on leaving the hospital, I ran against the doctor in charge, who commenced to scold, but, seeing my white face, desisted.

How we were hurried off to the shore. Ours was the last boat, the luggage was on board, when the steamer signalled, "No more passengers—too rough." What *was* to be done? We decided to brave the sea. I must tell you in those days New Plymouth had no breakwater, it was an open roadstead, surf-boats were in use, beautifully built and well manned. I have never seen such waves as on the New Plymouth coast after a storm; they literally rolled in mountains high, almost deafening even at some distance off, and I had never seen them more angry-looking than upon this occasion. Well, we started; the last hand-shakes were over. We were all laid at the bottom of the boat. It was an anxious, terrifying time the riding out over the billows. Then there was difficulty in getting us on board. We were hauled up by ropes as the boat rose to the surface of the waves.

We, the refugees, met with an enthusiastic welcome in Nelson. Personally, friends who had arranged to receive us had to give way to strangers, and "the doctor's daughter" and the "little ones" were almost spoiled with kindness. What I felt might be a short separation proved a lengthy one—fifteen months! The military authorities stepped in, forbidding women and children who had left to return until a truce was signed. The father used his influence, feeling acutely the separation, and securing a home, but his very position was against his efforts. He was reminded "to set an example." The friendly conclave who decided our fate in Nelson agreed we were all too young to brave life alone, so the time was spent in visiting. I cannot

describe the kindness we received, staying a few weeks with a judge and his wife, a leading doctor's family, crossing the Bay of Nelson in an open boat—the one steamer was sent to the seat of war—on a long visit to the "G—'s" beautiful home, Dr. G—— a leading man in politics, and an editor of a colonial paper, while over all the bishop and his wife gave a watchful friendliness. Later on, three of the younger boys were sent to college in Nelson; pending arrangements a home was taken for us where we could all be together. Once during the fifteen months the father came on a short sick leave. Life for us in Nelson would have been very happy under other circumstances, but the war wearily dragged on, death was busy among friends, epidemics spreading, letters were very slow in reaching us, and I yearned for the home faces!

At last the summons arrived to return. On the whole, it was a sad home-coming; one had not realized the changes. When affairs seemed more settled, and I was allowed to ride outside the barricades, how drearily desolate everything seemed. The ruined homesteads—in many instances rank vegetation had completely obliterated landmarks; our cave had been opened some little time before, its contents found intact, but naturally damp had nearly ruined everything damageable, but the garden was a wilderness of ferns and undergrowth. One very pleasant episode at this time remains on my mind—the consecration and presentation of colours to the volunteers and militia. Chaperoned by the commander's wife, who presented the colours, I had a good view of what proved a proud but touching scene. The father was grandly complimented for bravery and medical skill; and how many anecdotes were told me that day by the kindly officers and their wives. Just at this remark an amusing incident occurred. The father's horse, a restive, high-bred animal, had for some time shown a positive objection to the sounds of "the pageantry of war," and while the doctor was showing all graciousness to the pretty speeches given the horse bounded in the air and turned tail, literally running away. "Ah," said the commander of the garrison, "the doctor's modesty won't let him hear more." How the men marched past with military precision, then turned and halted just in our front! Justly indeed were they applauded also. "An organization of men," said the commander "that had proved a glory to the colony." And now

marched past the wounded. Ah, how pitiable! "Our boy," trying his best and stretching himself to his full height, six feet three, quite brisk on his crutches; he was called up, shaken hands with, and most sympathetically spoken with, told he "was one of three brothers especially noted for courage and self-possession." During the war the three elder "boys" brought out a *Punch*, engraving and printing it themselves. We still carried it on, for we all subscribed to the paper more or less; it sold wonderfully well, and was very popular. As time went on there was so much to sadden us in New Plymouth, we removed to Auckland. Peace was of short duration, however, and as again "wars and rumours of wars" broke out I was sent to England, the "boys" scattered, the father again alone at his post in New Plymouth. These are personal reminiscences; so of the second outbreak I do not write. I never returned to New Zealand; other ties sprang up, but never for one moment dulling the keen interest for news from and of the far-away home of "one's people."

LOUISA M. RAWSON-WALKER.

Janet.

AN EPISODE.

By G. BUTT,

Author of "CHRISTMAS ROSES," "LADS AND LASSES," "SPRIG OF HEATHER," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

I SHOULD think a man never came on leave to Simla more unsuited to the life and sentiment of the place in every way than Horace Anstruther. He was a Scotchman of the deepest dye, with all the virtues of his nation very strongly emphasized; but every one knows that it is not the *virtues* of Scotchmen which make them pleasant companions or agreeable fellow-creatures.

He was a tall, angular young man, with extremely agreeable eyes and decidedly red hair. The worst of his eyes was that they always saw more than they were meant to do, and made some fellows feel uncomfortable, but, for all that, they were his strong point. In character, as far as Simla knew him, he was rigidly truthful—which is not a virtue which commends itself to Simla society. He was reserved and solitary, and, if he interfered with nobody, he certainly asked nobody to interfere with him. He took his pleasures sadly, and hardly seemed to grasp the fact that they were pleasures at all.

If I have drawn his portrait harshly, or with an apparently unfriendly pencil, you must forgive me. To me, and to the few who got below the surface, and grew to know him, words would be too weak to express the fascination he possessed—the fascination of a character infinitely strong, and infinitely simple—puzzled, troubled and amused by the mean, tricky, shifty life about him. He had a dry humour which very few people even guessed at, and sometimes, in his more sociable moments, he would break out into an odd jumble of stories, and anecdotes, and reminiscences, which would keep us up until the small hours. When Sandy began to talk no one remembered bed, but, for all that,

half the men who listened did not understand him at all. "Sandy does not know how amusing he is," I heard one man say apologetically, who had been laughing at his stories all the evening, and it was this curious misconception, this strange and obstinate disbelief in him, that always appealed to me, when we first met. It gave me an unreal feeling about him and confused his identity. I often think that Scotchmen are more misunderstood than any people on earth.

He was dining with me at the club one night, when one of the other young fellows, for very insufficient reasons, began using extremely forcible and offensive language, and Danvers, who was also dining with us, remarked apologetically to Sandy that he was "so Scotch!" I shall never forget the sudden gleam in the grey eyes, or the quiet rejoinder, "Ay, so it seems."

Of course he was called Sandy—all Scotchmen are "Sandies" or "Macs"—and, as I said before, his hair was red—at least, so we all imagined, until, one day at tennis, some one happened to call it so before Miss Janet. Miss Janet was quite equal to the occasion—indeed, when was Miss Janet not equal to any occasion? She simply rose and said, "Mr. Selby, Mr. Anstruther's hair is not red any longer."

Mr. Selby almost jumped. "What, *dye*, Miss Janet?"

"It is *auburn*," said Janet, quite unmoved.

There was a regular chorus. "Is that a new name for *red*?" "I thought only mothers were colour-blind." I alone went to the heart of the matter by saying, "Why, Janet?"

"Because I *like* him," said Janet, lifting her large, bright eyes swiftly to mine.

Of course there was nothing more to be said. Sandy's hair was *auburn*.

* * * *

An hour later Janet was racing her rickshaw home "at extreme speed," contrary to all municipal notices, side by side with her sister, Mrs. Oliphant.

"And the best of it is, I don't know him, not even by sight," she shouted to her sister during their short and swift descent, "and I hope I never shall. Oh, Alicia, how much nicer men are when you don't know them!"

"It makes red hair auburn," said Alicia.

"Oh, *that*," said Janet with contempt. "That's the kind of

thing that makes me despise an absolute monarchy. Why, in New York, if you had brains, who would care about the *envelope*?"

"My dear Janet, I sometimes wonder what there is inside your *envelope*."

"My dear Alicia, fortunately, I expect nothing from you. You, with everything before you to make life happy, went—and married! Oh, don't speak; hush! put up your parasol—you know the real Simla way, don't you? Here is Mr. Saunders."

With a dive, she disappeared under her large umbrella just as Alicia's agonized remonstrance reached her.

"But you *know* Mr. Saunders, Janet, I am sure you do. What are you thinking of?"

A few minutes later Janet emerged again triumphantly.

"That was well done, was it not?" she said. "I could give points to an ostrich."

"But why?" repeated Alicia in bewildered surprise. "What reason *can* you have for cutting the poor man?"

"A very good reason," said Janet solemnly; "I consider him improper."

"Improper! Why, I have known him for years."

"That is your logic, all over. He may have been proper once, but he has deteriorated in Simla—people often do."

"But, dear Janet, be serious. He is the quietest, most respectable, peaceable old gentleman in Simla."

"He seems so," said Janet. "Men are so deceitful! Anyhow he spoke to me without an introduction."

"Janet!"

"He did. I don't mean at a party or anything of that kind. It was in the *open road*. I was trying my new jhampannies—making them race down the long hill, just to see how they could go, and this wicked old friend of yours rode up and joined me, and spoke to me."

"Probably he recognized you."

"Oh dear no; he kept trying to find out who I was. If he said once, he said fifty times, 'I don't know who you are!'"

"But what did he say?"

"Oh, that does not matter in the least," said Janet loftily. "Something about 'fastness' and a 'reckless manner'—which was only adding insult to injury."

"Janet," said Alicia, laughing, "you are incorrigible! And what did you do?"

"I kept out of sight under the hood, and when I thought he was going too far, I said, in a muffled voice, 'Then how *dare* you speak to a lady you do not know!' My dear, the arrow from the bow gives but a faint idea of the way he left me—but, you see," with a sudden, frank change of manner, "he may recognize the jhampannies, so I have to be careful."

* * * * *

"I *know* Captain Anstruther," she announced, a week later, "and I am glad I stood up for his hair—it is so undeniably red. He asked to be introduced to me, but I really was sorry, because I hate losing an ideal. Fancy! his mother is that old Mrs. Anstruther we met in Perthshire. Isn't it sweet of him to have a mother? Have you ever noticed his eyes? They are one of the evidences of *waste* in nature—no man requires eyes like that, and they would be a godsend to a woman."

"If you do not take care, Janet, you will be falling in love."

"I?" with supreme contempt, "with a penniless subaltern—and take a back seat for ever!"

"I don't see that that would be a *sine quâ non*."

"I am much mistaken if it would not be with him."

"Well, dear, it would improve your character."

"My character is good enough, thank you—what there is of it; and plenty of it, such as it is."

CHAPTER II.

So they drifted, drifted through the autumn days, and, by slow degrees, something came to Janet that she had hitherto missed—a sweetness and gentleness that made her doubly charming, and that softened her little asperities of speech and manner. She asked herself no questions—she worried herself by no analyses—but, oh, happy time of youth and sunshine, she grew to love! And Horace Anstruther drifted too—drifted through all the sweet uncertainties, all the shoals and quicksands of a passing fancy—to the deep, deep sea, where there are shipwrecks! And Alicia watched sitting, like the goddesses on Olympus, directing a dance here, a picnic there, smiling over each successful meeting—wrathful at the failures—feeling that she had a

certain power even over the three grim sisters, who have such uncertain ways of handling the scissors.

Every one in Simla knew that Mr. Anstruther was in love before he found it out himself; even Janet, sweet Janet, whom he had tamed unknowingly. It was a short dream, during which the road round "Jakko" was a paradise, and the drawing-room at "The Pines" was an enchanted palace, and Janet was the sleeping princess, who was wakened with a kiss. It was just like an old, old fairy story, or a dream; but Mr. Anstruther woke at last, and faced the grim reality in the courageous manner with which he always faced the realities of life. He did not excuse himself; he did not pander to his weakness; he did not shuffle it out of sight, under a false name. He stood in the starlight, one evening, when he had left her, and pulled off his cap, and said softly, half aloud, "By heaven! I *love* her."

And, inside the bungalow, the shadow had fallen on Alicia too, as she looked up at the beautiful, happy face that smiled upon her—a shadow hardly worthy of the name—a little cloud like a man's hand.

"Oh, I *wish* she had not fallen in love," she said vaguely to herself.

"Janet,"—a minute later, "you will miss Mr. Anstruther. He goes down, you know, in three days."

Janet had taken off her hat, and her soft hair fell in little tumbled curls upon her forehead.

"Yes," she said absently, "I shall miss him."

"It is a good thing," said Alicia, in a breathless way, but still boldly, "that you never—fall in love."

Janet lifted her eyebrows in frank surprise. "Why, Alicia, I thought that was what you always regretted in me, so I have been trying—to please you."

"It was very sweet of you," hesitating, "but don't—don't trouble. I think it is better, on the whole, to flirt, than marry."

"Alicia," said Janet solemnly, "I believe John is ill-treating you? Speak the word, and I will have his blood."

Alicia looked down. "I—I was thinking of you," she said gently.

"Oh, don't worry about me. Perhaps I shall be caught after all. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband. I keep comforting myself with that—but I think it is often true, don't you, that uneasy lies the head that wears the crown?"

"Janet dear, forgive me—don't laugh at me, but—is Mr. Anstruther in earnest? He is going down in three days, and he has said—nothing!"

"But, dear," said Janet, "he is Scotch—they never say anything."

"Oh, Janet, is he serious?"

"My dear Alicia, did you ever know him to be anything else? Even to please you, I cannot bring myself to wish that he should be more serious than he is."

"Oh, Janet," with a quiver in her voice, "I want you to be happy."

"Do you think," with a quick, light laugh, "that it would make me happy to marry into the British army on five shillings and sixpence a day—isn't that the sum?"

"No, I don't," bravely; "but I am so afraid it is not so much to *him* as to you."

It was out, and there was a moment's pause. Alicia, leaning on her elbow, turned her face away. Janet still sat staring blankly before her.

Then again her light laugh broke the silence.

"And if I were to fall in love with the young man with red hair, and if the young man with red hair were *not* to fall in love with me, I will promise you one thing, Alicia. I will not sit and wither away on your front verandah. If I died of love, and was buried, I should become a 'spook' at once if I heard Mrs. Anson, in a 'kala jagagh' speaking of my misplaced affections between a kiss and a kiss! Ah, here he is at last. Good-bye."

With a sudden movement, she rose to her feet, and stooped over her sister.

"You are a good little soul, Alicia," she said; "worth all the red hair in Asia."

And she was gone.

CHAPTER III.

It was what Janet called a heavenly day—a blue distance, with gleams, then the soft grey outlines of the nearer hills, and nearest of all, the red creepers flaring amongst the dull green branches of the ivy oaks. The summer was coming to an end.

An end! Janet flung away the thought with a quick movement of her head, as they cantered quickly on round the "Jakko"

road, so replete with memories, and so full of sweet associations to so many generations of Simla folk. At the toll they dismounted, and Janet stood for a moment watching the syces lead the ponies away in a cloud of dust. She felt a little nervous and constrained, a little inclined to laugh, and mock, and put off the supreme moment, but, turning, she met Mr. Anstruther's dark eyes fixed upon her, full of meaning—full of pain! In a moment the shadow had lifted from them, and he smiled, but the remembrance chilled her.

"Come," he said, stretching out his hand, "come, and rest, and be happy for a whole hour."

"A whole hour," said Janet, "is not much out of a lifetime."

"But, sometimes, it is all the fates give us."

Janet came and sat down obediently.

"Don't be enigmatical," she said; "remember you are not published with a key."

After that there was a long silence, and the watch at Janet's wrist ticked almost like the beating of a human heart. A little waterfall beside them grew importunate, and the crickets distracting. Mr. Anstruther was sitting quite still looking far out at the dim horizon.

"Speak to me," said Janet suddenly, in a nervous voice.

"I have nothing to say."

Again, across Janet's heart there fell that nameless chill, but she rallied with a laugh.

"It is the last time," she said wistfully.

With a quick movement, he turned. He stretched out his hand and took hers into a close, firm grasp, bending over her until his breath was on her hair.

"Child, don't tempt me," he said; "there is nothing I can say."

"Is silence *ever* best?" she asked breathlessly, out of the experience of her life.

"Surely! God knows at what a cost."

His voice thrilled through her—cold and constrained no longer. In it there was an agonized entreaty. The grasp of his hand was absolute pain—the look in his eyes mastered and subdued her, and filled her with a sharp, unreasoning fear—but it was worth it all! The thought flashed exultingly through her—this supreme moment of fullest knowledge would be cheaply purchased by an eternity of pain.

She tried to speak, but the barrier of silence he had put between them held her back. He dropped her hand, and rose to his feet. His face was full of passionate pain, but he was perfectly still—it seemed as if he could not control himself sufficiently to speak. The trickle of the little waterfall grew to enormous proportions, and thundered like Niagara; the crickets filled the air with the buzz and hum of life.

It was Janet's soft young voice that broke in upon the discordant sounds.

"Is this the *end*?" she said pathetically.

"This is the end," he answered.

No feeling of wrong done, or anguish borne gave any personal expression to her pain. It all seemed too vague, and undefined, and far away. It was the ending of a dream—that was all. There seemed to be no meaning in reproach—no word to remember—nothing but silence and regret. The fates had been against it, and they had severed the thread!

For a full minute they stood face to face silently, then Horace leant over her.

"I *must* tell you one thing," he said hoarsely. "I am engaged to be married."

The world seemed to reel round her, but, with an instinct of pride, she conjured up a pale smile.

"Speak, Janet," he said passionately, but she made no answer.

And so they rode back, through the dying daylight, by the old familiar road round Jakko. They met no one excepting Mrs. Anson, who turned, with the innocent smile that had outlived so much, to the man who rode beside her.

"I don't believe that Ogilvie girl has caught Horace after all," she said, and she laughed.

That was all; that was the epitaph over Janet's earliest love. No one else in Simla either knew or cared anything about it. As long as she laughed, and talked, and flirted, they did not look below the surface. The world is always afraid of tragedy. At the door they parted, almost silently. "Forgive me," he said brokenly. And she answered softly, "I have nothing to forgive."

* * * *

For one minute she waited in the cool of the dark verandah, before she lifted the chick. Alicia was reading in the bright circle of lamplight, but she thrust the book from her, with an im-

patient gesture, as Janet came in, shading her eyes. The glare blinded her for a minute, and she almost stumbled, but when she came close to the table she was smiling.

"Well?" said Alicia breathlessly.

"Well," echoed Janet, "the curtain is rung down, Alicia—the play is over, and I am free to tell you *now* that the young man with red hair is engaged to be married."

"And you knew it all the time," said Alicia. "Oh, Janet, secret or no secret, you ought to have told me—it has been very hard on *me*."

* * * * *

It was years afterwards that Horace told me fragments of the story, and I pieced them together. We had drifted apart, and I had seen little of him since he married, for I always thought he had treated Janet badly, and it was once, when he had drawn my reluctant condemnation from me, that he told me the story that I have written down.

It was then also that he showed me two letters, hidden away in the depths of his despatch box, of which he had never spoken. One was dated "Simla," and ran as follows:

"DEAR MAGGIE,—

"The moment has come, as you thought it might, when I see that freedom may be better for us both. If it is still only a question of money, all I have is yours.

"Yours,

"HORACE ANSTRUTHER."

The answer had come from "Meigle, Perthshire," a month later:

"DEAR HORACE,—

"As I know you only make the offer for my sake, I don't mind telling you that it is no longer a matter of money. I love you.

"Yours always,

"MAGGIE."

"She is a good woman," Horace said softly, and, after I had read them, he burnt the letters.

Sebastian Delpiano, Painter.

CHAPTER I.

SEBASTIAN DELPIANO threw down brush and palette, and retreating a few steps stood surveying critically the picture on the easel before him. A bright girlish face smiled at him from out of the canvas—a pretty pink and white thing with soft outlines. In the clear depths of the big blue eyes there still lingered that wondering, almost wistful, look belonging to childhood's innocence, and just then to Sebastian's overwrought fancy they seemed to be asking a question of him—a question to which the answer would come but too readily. And as the painter looked his brow clouded and the shade of pain deepened on his face. He gave an impatient shrug of his shoulders. "Sebastian, you are a fool," he muttered; "and knowing it, why can you not cure yourself of your folly?"

He turned from the picture and flung himself down on a great many-hued divan, and leaning back wearily in the soft cushions, shut his eyes. The unveiled light streamed down from the great north window of the studio on his pale face almost waxen in hue. The dark soft hair was pushed off the high white forehead, furrowed by two deep lines between the straight black eyebrows; the nose was finely modelled with sharply-cut nostrils, the mouth hidden by a drooping moustache whose ends mingled with the small, dark, pointed beard. Dressed up in doublet and ruff Sebastian could have sat for a portrait of Vandyke such as they are familiar to us.

All was still within the great studio; it was mid-day, and a southern drowsiness made the air heavy. A soft breath stirred the leaves of the palm tree placed in a big terra-cotta jar near the open window. On the terrace outside a couple of pigeons were strutting up and down in the sunlight cooing to one another noisily; beyond, a background of mimosa, aloes and palms, and above all the blue sky, of a blue so intense, so deep in tone, as to put to shame the watery pallor of our northern

fine-day skies. The walls of the studio were covered with studies and sketches of every description. Here an old fisherman, a high red cap surmounting his bushy locks, with keen restless eyes set in a swarthy weather-beaten face, looked suspiciously at you; there a piece of walled garden bright with geranium and flaming cactus; next it a large study of a storm at sea, with wild tossing waves sending their spray high into the misty grey air, sea and sky blended in one. Looking at it you could have fancied you heard the roar of those mighty waves and felt the salt wind fan your cheek with its damp breath, so true to nature was the copy of it. And Sebastian Delpiano had gained fame by one of his sea pieces exhibited fifteen years before, when he was but a poor, hard-working, unknown student at the Turin Academy of Painting. By a piece of good luck he had obtained a place for his picture on the walls of the yearly art exhibition held in that city, and had the further good luck of gaining the gold medal with it, emerging thus at one leap from obscurity. All the leading Italian papers mentioned his success and prophesied a brilliant future for the rising young talent. Sebastian had fulfilled in a measure the prediction. Within five years his name had become one of those which seem destined to be inscribed in golden letters on the pages of art. At the end of that time he, a young man of thirty, had received the flattering offer of the directorship of the Academy—a coveted post—and had refused it. What could be the reason of this piece of folly? the world wondered; and still greater was the wonder when at the same time Delpiano suddenly left the city which had been the scene of his short-lived triumphs and had disappeared no one knew whither. From time to time, at always longer intervals, a picture with the well-known signature scrawled in the corner had found its way to Turin, or Rome, or Venice, but the critics had shaken their heads. Where was the old bold touch and striking individuality of treatment which had characterized the maestro's previous works? Now they bore a stamp of feebleness, of a studied effect, lacking altogether the "sacred fire" which the great painters infuse into their pictures, and which makes the public not merely see but feel the power conveyed in them. Sebastian had flung away the paper in which for the first time he had seen the truth about himself in black and white, though as yet very guardedly expressed—regrets that, evidently owing to some momentary

physical influence, the work of the clever artist lacked its usual power of expression. None better than he himself knew that he had failed miserably, and he found no force left to rouse himself to combat the lethargy of the senses which was creeping over him, dulling his sensibility to the beauties of nature. Day by day he said to himself, "I will make the effort; I will paint with the enthusiasm which brought me success," but it ever remained at the thought only.

Now for the cause of the moral sickness from which the painter was suffering, unknown and unguessed at by all those who had been once his friends and companions. The person of all others who should have encouraged him in his work, shared every triumph of his with a heart swelling with grateful pride and love, was the one who had been the ruin of his life, had blighted all his highest prospects and condemned him to an existence utterly damning to an artist's impressionable nature. Mother! That word was the key-note which had struck the minor chord in the harmony of the painter's life. Till that one fatal day, twenty years before this story opens, he had believed his mother had died when he was a little toddling thing, too young to keep any remembrance of her—so his father had told him. As he grew older he noticed the latter's strange reticence about everything concerning his mother, her name was never mentioned, no portrait of her was there to recall vividly her presence once in their midst; and the boy had wondered and longed to hear about her who in his boyish mind he loved and revered above everything, surrounding her image with a halo of worship, picturing her to himself as having been adorable in every way. He loved to think she might even now see him, be allowed to watch over him in some mysterious supernatural way. In all his troubles his thoughts would instinctively fly to her for comfort. Often he would whisper, "Mother, darling, you hear me, and understand," and would feel comforted by the belief of her invisible presence near him.

Sebastian was then a shy sensitive lad, given to dreaming, and incapable of looking at life in a practical matter-of-fact way. With his father he had no bond of sympathy; the latter was cold and stern in his manner to the boy whom one would have said he positively disliked, and caused poor Sebastian to shrink still further into the thin shell of his over-sensitive nature.

Signor Delpiano was professor of astronomy at the Genoa Observatory. They had formerly lived in Venice, and there it was that Sebastian's mother had died, so he had been told. Of those days he had no recollection. And so the boy grew up with no loving hand to train him, no loving heart in which to confide his childish joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments. If it had not been for his painting Sebastian would have been altogether miserable, but roaming about with his brush and colours by the sea-shore the boy spent the only happy hours of his life. He was passionately fond of the sea, and no small wonder with its ever-varying beauty always before his eyes.

His father, urged by his friends, who noticed Sebastian's great talent and utter unfitness for any career involving application or drudgery, reluctantly consented to let him study painting as a profession. The evening before he was to leave home for Turin to enter the Academy there as art student, Signor Delpiano, who had been shut up for several hours in his beloved observatory, did not come down to supper as usual, and the servant sent to call him had returned with a scared face, saying that her master was lying on the floor motionless. An apoplectic stroke had put an end to the astronomer's unsatisfied researches after the infinite.

As an orphan, alone in the world, without money or protection to help him, Sebastian had entered the battle of life, to vanquish or be vanquished ; time would show.

CHAPTER II.

TEN years ago exactly, the 20th March, the same day that Sebastian is sitting in the great studio, a worn-out, weary man, how different all had been then ! It was at a dinner given by his friends and brother artists to congratulate him on receiving the offer of the directorship of the Academy which had come to him that morning. His answer was, according to custom, to be sent in within the space of three days, but not a shadow of doubt existed about the possibility of his refusing the honour offered him. In a few grateful words, and with evident emotion, he had accepted the toast, "To our future master," drunk with loud acclamations and enthusiasm by the company. Proud and happy had Delpiano felt that evening ; he had not worked in vain, but had acquired for himself a position amongst his fellow-men, one in which he would be honoured, admired and looked up to ;

a pleasant feeling indeed, against which the hardest natures are not proof, and to one like Sebastian, sensitive as an *Æolean* harp to the breath which passes over it, success is tenfold more precious than to those encased in self and callous to others. His heart, with its great capacity for love and devotion, which had found as yet no one object on which to concentrate itself, made him the kindest, the most amiable of friends. He enjoyed a deserved popularity amongst his brother artists, who instead of grudging him his success were proud of it. And just when he seemed to have pushed his way to the front ranks of those who march on triumphant to win fame and glory for their own, destiny decreed that he should be cut down, that the prize almost within his grasp should be flung far from his reach, and the ranks close over him leaving no trace even of where his place had been.

* * * * *

"Your mother, whom you were taught to believe dead, is here and calls you to her ; you will not refuse what may be now her dying request." That was what the little scented paper had contained which a servant had brought him at dessert. He had looked at the unfamiliar handwriting on the delicately-tinted note-paper. "Some fair enthusiast," he thought, for he was accustomed to the admiration paid him by the other sex on account of his good looks and newly-acquired celebrity. With the freedom of Italian women in such matters these admirers of his were wont to show their sentiments openly, and not often to the painter's taste. Thus he was about to thrust the note into his pocket unread, when a sudden impulse of curiosity made him open it instead, and having done so the smile on his face vanished leaving it petrified. He read the words over and over again stupidly as one dazed trying to grasp the reality of what seemed to him as a message from another world. His mother not dead, but here in this very city, and calling him, her son, to her ! What was the meaning of it ? why had he been taught to believe her dead ? A terrible apprehension seized him, a shrinking from the dawn of truth at last. He sat with the paper in his hand looking at it as if he saw an apparition ; his emotion was too apparent to escape the notice of his friends ; they looked at him curiously, but there was that in his face which checked all inquiry. They waited anxiously for some explanation, and now it came in low, unsteady

tones, unlike Sebastian's own ; as he spoke he looked straight before him, not at his friends :

"I have received a message which calls me away immediately. I know you will pardon my leaving you thus abruptly, my friends, and believe how unwillingly I do so, but I must, indeed I must."

He had risen while speaking and stood now crumpling the bit of paper he held with nervous excitement. The others watching him knew something of grave importance had occurred, and were full of ready sympathy with their comrade in his unknown trouble. As Sebastian hurried down the steps of the restaurant as one in a dream, he still seemed to feel the warm grasp of their hands, still hear their kind words ring in his ear, and it was as if he had heard them for the last time, as if he had been suddenly thrust out of the joyous circle of his friends into an outer darkness full of vague misgivings, of fearful presentiments.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day Sebastian's answer to the electing committee of the Academy was sent in—it was a refusal. Great was the consternation it produced ; he had not even allowed the customary three days to lapse, to consider his decision. What was the meaning of it? When the news spread like wildfire amongst his friends some of them hurried off to his lodgings to seek him, only to find them empty, swept and garnished. The landlady with a flow of eloquence and much gesticulation informed them that the "Signore" had been packing all the morning and had left by the mid-day train for Genoa. He was going on a journey, he had told her, and would probably not come back ; his manner had been very strange, she thought, and had frightened her, but she had not dared ask him any questions. That was all she had to tell. Pursuing their search for an explanation of their friend's disappearance, the young men next went to the house where Sebastian had his studio. The key to it hung on the board in the porter's lodge. Questioned, the man said the Signore had been there very early that morning and had spent about half-an-hour in the studio ; when he came down again he had looked very pale and agitated, and had told him, the porter, that he was going away for some time and he wished nothing in the studio touched during his absence, and after himself hanging up the key, had hurried off *comme un mato*—here the porter tapped his forehead

significantly. From that day Turin beheld Sebastian Delpiano no more ; he was gone, vanished as utterly out of his old life and its associations as if he were already lying in his grave.

* * * * *

One evening some weeks later a travelling carriage, thickly powdered with the white dust of the Corniche road, was slowly ascending the steep promontory on which the little fishing village of San Rocco stands perched. The outlines of the tall Campanile and irregular, picturesquely-piled houses were sharply defined against the background of clear blue sky ; all around, nature in its wild, luxuriant southern beauty, unmeddled and unspoiled by the "improving" hand of gardener or land agent. And what a view as the carriage, turning the last curve of the road, reached the top of the hill ! There lay to the westward the whole coast-line extending to the headland of Villefranche, and beyond in a pinkish haze the outlines of the Esterelles were dimly visible. Succeeding each other, peak after peak, crag upon crag, their rocky sides all bathed in soft blue shadows, the spurs of the Appenines descended downward to the coast-line, their base clothed thickly with olive and orange and all the fragrant shrubs of the south. The white houses of the towns on the coast gleamed dazzling in the setting sun—Monaco, Monte Carlo, Mentone, nearer Ventimiglia, with its quaint mediæval churches and decayed palaces clinging to the side of the rocky headland ; then a strip of flat coast, the road on either side bordered by dark groves of orange and lemon ; behind the hills rose gently in rounded olive-clad slopes. Rising out of this wooded plain, the promontory of San Rocco stood boldly out into the Mediterranean. Here and there in the brilliant blue was a patch of a lighter shade, showing where some hillside stream mingled its waters with those of the sea.

Away on the horizon a white sail or two showed against the azure background of sky, streaked with rose and amber ; and it came about that, fascinated by the magic beauty of the spot, Sebastian Delpiano chose to make his home there, the home which was to be his mother's haven of rest, where she was to spend the remainder of the days allotted her surrounded by her son's untiring care and devotion. What lay in his power to do should be done to soothe those last days, to soften the remembrance of what had gone before. A weary, discontented

woman, sick in body and mind, moved by a sudden impulse of a wish for tardy atonement, a half-reparation of the wrong done, she had sought her son—the son whose cradle she had deserted thirty years before to follow the man who had taken advantage of her folly, her self-love, and had tempted her away from her husband, whom she had married without love, and who had not known how to teach her it during the two years of their wedded life. She had found it an easy thing then to forget her child, as yet too young to fill any place in her life!

It was before the time of the commencement of the Italian struggle for national independence, for a united kingdom. The Austrians still held Venice, and one of them, a handsome young officer, was quartered in the professor's house. It was the old, old story—the telling of it finished after a few sighs, a few burning glances, hurried confidences secretly exchanged, and then one day she was gone, and her husband said, "She is dead," and set to work to banish every recollection, every trace of her from out of his life and that of the son whom he now regarded with aversion, and on whose innocent head was to fall the curse of his mother's sin. Now she had come back to him, begging his forgiveness for the irreparable injury she had done him, actuated also by an unconfessed desire for companionship, for escaping from the intolerable sense of insecurity, of the haunting anxiety about the future which had taken hold of her since she had realized the fact that her beauty was now a thing of the past, and tasted the bitterness of the change time brings to one such as her. And even after he had heard all from her own lips Sebastian had forgiven her. Whatever reproaches may have risen in his heart against her they were silenced by the voice of an immense pity at sight of her now, so weak; so helpless, despised and flouted by those who had once fawned on her. She had thrown herself on his pity, his protection. "My son," she had said weeping, "you will not turn away from her whose flesh and blood you are?" Quickly Sebastian had taken his resolve. He would not allow her to remain where the whole shameful story of her life would be sure to transpire, and how could he explain satisfactorily the reappearance of a mother whose death had been duly registered thirty years before?

He and she together must find a hiding-place from the prying eyes of the world though it involved the defeat of all his (Sebas-

tian's) dearest hopes and ambitions. It was his plain duty to sacrifice them to his mother. The immense capability of devotion which lay in his nature, now called for the first time into play, enabled him to make the sacrifice without a moment's hesitation and with an enthusiasm which put all idea of self into the background.

And so the ten years of abnegation had begun. Nursed by him with unceasing devotion his mother's health had greatly improved. The incurable disease from which she was suffering seemed to have received a check for a time. She no longer spoke about dying, except when, with an invalid's irritability, she imagined some neglect on the part of her son, some trifling omission in the loving care with which he surrounded her. And he, as clearer and clearer grew his insight into the shallow, wholly frivolous nature of her whom he had made the idol of his thoughts and dreams since earliest childhood, the more intolerable grew the disappointment, the impossibility of shutting his eyes to the cruel truth.

His soul sickened in the uncongenial contact with a nature so wholly opposed to his own, and yet this was his mother, the one person on earth to whom he was bound by tie of duty, of filial respect, and not for a second would he flinch from the martyrdom imposed on him though the last drop of his heart's blood were drained in the ordeal.

CHAPTER IV.

IN ten years the whole aspect of a coast village on the Riviera is wont to alter, and such was the case with San Rocco. The British nomad had found it out, electing it for winter quarters, had built his house, had called his friends who in their turn had built their houses, and now a small colony of the children of Albion had raised the prices, civilized the place, and induced the most enterprising among the natives to erect two hotels and several modest *pensions*. As yet San Rocco had not aspired to be fashionable, but was simply a quiet cheap place patronized by families seeking these advantages, coupled with a delightful climate and unrivalled beauty of scenery, wherein to winter away from the fogs and damp of their own country. But it was destined to be visited in a casual way by fashion in the person of a Lady Emily Jones, who, on her way from Cannes to Florence,

chose to perform part of the journey by carriage to see the beauty of the Corniche road, and had been so charmed with San Rocco that, instead of only staying one day there, as she had intended, she had decided to remain a couple of weeks, and the charm of the place growing on her had further delighted the heart of her hotelkeeper by taking on her suite of rooms, occupying his whole first floor, for a month longer. At once she and her daughter became the *point de mire* of the little colony. Miss Ginevra Jones was a blooming specimen of the average healthy-bodied, frank-minded young English girl just emerged from the schoolroom, but not yet having made her formal entry into society at one of her Majesty's drawing-rooms. She was an only child and the heiress to her father's millions, which he had acquired during long years of patient industry. From being an ordinary workman in an iron foundry he had gradually risen to be the owner of the largest, the most wealthy establishment of the kind, doing a world-wide trade. Backed by his riches he had ventured timidly into those circles of society whose *entrée* the self-made man ever burns to achieve. Encouraged by the kindness (as he deemed it) which met him on all sides, Job Jones had further ventured to propose to the eldest daughter of an impoverished duke in her tenth season with three younger sisters all well married. He was desperately in love with her, and being a guileless man was overwhelmed with joy and amazement at being accepted on the spot. Well, he had the good taste of soon removing himself from the scenes into which his ambition had transplanted him and whose soil was not one in which his simple uneducated nature could be expected to thrive. He felt the sense of his own shortcomings painfully now when amongst his wife's friends, who, since he had married, seemed somehow to treat him quite differently; where formerly he had been flattered and cajoled, he was now ignored. But most of all did he feel his inferiority in the daily contact of his married life.

To do Lady Emily justice she was always kind to him and a good wife in the most ordinary sense of the word, but feeling her own superiority so intensely she could not help showing it, and reduced honest Job to a cipher in his own house and family. She had shed copious tears at his death, which occurred two years after their marriage, for she had appreciated his good

qualities and touching worship of herself. Her tears had soon dried though, and she had set to work to enjoy life thoroughly, as a young rich widow has plenty of scope for doing. She had not remarried, being loth to lose her independence and the £20,000 a year left her, which by some sudden inexplicable fit of jealousy Job had inserted in his will she should forfeit if she gave him a successor.

The years had passed quickly enough and now Ginevra was grown up, and an all-engrossing interest had entered her mother's life, that her daughter should make one of the most brilliant marriages of the day; with her fresh young beauty and her well-known fortune this was no unreasonable thing to demand. Lady Emily, reviewing in her mind all the most eligible *partis*, had fixed on the one she would like for her daughter, and it was a particularly lucky coincidence that the young man in question was the son of her dearest friend, Lady Susan Hope, and having only that year attained his majority had succeeded to the title and enormous revenues of his uncle, the late Marquess of Cringeltie. Lady Susan was equally anxious for the marriage. There remained only the question of the two young people's acquiescence in the disposition of their hearts and hands. As children they had played together, quarrelled and made it up again, and remained fast friends all throughout the progressive stages of their development.

Harry Cringeltie was a jolly, easy-going young fellow without any of the feeble affectation of masherdom in his healthy organization. For two years previous to his coming of age, which great event had occurred a month previously, he had been travelling round the globe in charge of a tutor. It was, therefore, two years since he and Ginevra had met.

The girl was to be presented at one of the early drawing-rooms that year, and were all to turn out as her mother desired, she would, at the end of her first season, become Marchioness of Cringeltie. Of course not a hint was dropped to her of this possibility. Nothing, Lady Emily justly observed, puts two young people more surely against each other than the knowledge that interfering relatives plan their union. She counted solely on those circumstances which seemed favourable to the realization of her wish—the sympathy already existing between the young people and her daughter's beauty, which ripened with

every day and was sufficient to kindle the fire of a feeling warmer than ordinary friendship in a young man's heart.

For the present Lady Emily was living in anticipation, and enjoying thoroughly the pure air, lovely scenery and quiet of San Rocco. Like many elderly fashionable ladies she had of late fancied herself delicate and requiring peculiar care and attention on the part of her surroundings. She enjoyed being coddled and having to attend to the various rules which her complaisant London doctor had laid down for her to observe. He had found that she had a tendency to bronchitis, which of course must be immediately checked. So whenever Lady Emily was afflicted with the common ailment of a cold in the head she would go to bed, and in her fear really work herself up into a feverish state, which aggravated her symptoms. Possessing a treasure of a maid, an old family servant thoroughly versed in all her mistress's little weaknesses and fostering them, Lady Emily enjoyed the comfort of being nursed and waited on to the full. During these attacks of the incipient malady threatening her (as she considered), and which occurred pretty frequently during their stay at San Rocco owing to the draughty condition of the hotel, Ginevra was confided to the care of an old English lady staying in the house. She had been a friend of Lady Emily's mother at some remote period before the latter became a duchess, and so possessed a passport to the intimacy of the Jones'. Lady Emily's rule when travelling was never to make hotel acquaintances.

Old Mrs. Vere took a great liking to Ginevra from the first. The girl's light frank manner, free from all self-consciousness, pleased her; she was so fresh, so impressionable, everything delighted her so intensely.

"San Rocco is the most beautiful place on earth; it is more—it is like what I imagine heaven must be; I love it," the girl would say enthusiastically.

Being supposed by her mother to possess a turn for painting, and having received many lessons in it, she tried to reproduce on paper those scenes which charmed her. Wandering about with her little paint-box and sketch-book she would boldly and unskilfully set to work at the most difficult bits, and then in despair at the mess she made of her attempted pictures, would rub all out again with tears of vexation in her pretty eyes. "If only I

could have sketching lessons here," she often said, so often that at last to satisfy her Lady Emily made inquiries of the hotel-keeper whether there was any artist in the place who gave lessons. Yes, there was an artist, *una celebrità*, but he did not give lessons, Signor Colombi thought; still he might be asked. Hearing this, Ginevra burned to have lessons from this "celebrated" man, the more so from the apparent uncertainty of obtaining them. Through the medium of three people did this wish reach Sebastian's ears. The hotelkeeper had of course spoken of it to his wife, who, possessed of a romantic turn of mind, was immediately fired with the idea of bringing the handsome *pittore* and lovely young English miss together. Sebastian was loved and revered by the simple San Roccites; his devotion to his sick aunt—for as such he passed off his mother, wishing securely to guard their secret—would have sufficed to cast a halo round him in their eyes, and to add to it he was the kindest and most generous friend the poor fisher-folk had ever known.

Madame Colombi went straight off to a Mr. Delaine, the oldest English resident in the place, and the only member of San Rocco society who could boast of a friendship with the painter, who held himself aloof in impenetrable seclusion. This Mr. Delaine was a kind-hearted, somewhat eccentric man, endowed with a superabundant vitality and energy, which found outlet in the pursuance of numerous fads which succeeded each other with surprising rapidity. At that time he had a craze for everything Italian, and plunged into the religious discussions of the day with more vehemence than discretion. He held the chair at Campanello meetings, undertook the propaganda of the new doctrines, and contrived to make a perpetual stir around him. In clothes manufactured by the San Rocco tailor, an enormous felt wideawake on his head, he had succeeded in annihilating the tailor-made, outward aspect of an Englishman, but his round fresh-coloured face and bushy sandy-coloured whiskers gave the lie to his assumption of Italianism. The Delpianos had aroused his curiosity, there were rumours afloat about Sebastian's celebrity as a painter, but the life he led was more that of a hermit than of one who had made his mark in the world. What could be the reason of his burying himself thus at San Rocco?

One day Mr. Delaine had walked into the studio unannounced,

where the painter was idling away a leisure hour off duty, his mother being employed taking her mid-day siesta.

"My name is Delaine, of Villa Eglantine. I would have come and called on you long ago, but have been so busy of late about that anti-Catholic movement we have got up. When Campanello comes we shall have a grand meeting and knock our opponents all into nowhere. Suppose you don't take much interest in these questions—taken up with art, eh? A lot of fine things you seem to have here. May I have a look round?" and Mr. Delaine proceeded to make a minute inspection of the sketches hung on the studio walls, stepping back, shading his eyes with his hand and keeping up running comments: "Very fine that—awfully good—true to nature—what!" &c., while Sebastian, divided between feelings of half-amusement, half-annoyance, at the intrusion of this eccentric visitor, followed him about with his hands in his pockets, receiving his compliments in silence.

At the end of half an hour Mr. Delaine took his departure, leaving behind him a more favourable impression than he had made at his entry. Sebastian appreciated the honest, straightforward bluntness of the man, whose name he had often before heard from the poor folks of San Rocco, in connection with little deeds of kindness, showing a heart in the right place. And so in time a friendship had grown up between the two men. The painter was often glad when he could escape from his weary watch beside his mother's sick couch and go to Villa Eglantine and have a chat and a smoke with its cheery inmate. Mr. Delaine's kindly heart had warmed to Sebastian from the first.

Seeing him so lonely, guessing him to be unhappy, was enough to secure the good man's friendship. "He has a skeleton in his cupboard," he thought, "but he keeps the door tight shut that no outsiders may have a peep at it. Well, whatever it is, it is no concern of mine, and what I have to do is to try and cheer the poor beggar up a bit; that aunt of his must be real riling, and he has the patience of a saint with her."

Madame Delpiano had expressed a wish to know her son's English friend, so Sebastian had nothing for it but to bring him into his mother's drawing-room, where she lay all day long in semi-obscurity, with closed shutters, on her *chaise longue*, got up in an elaborate *négligé*, her face touched up with colour here and there.

In the half-light the wrinkles and imperfections of the faded face were concealed and it looked still handsome ; her large dark eyes, with their circle of belladonna, had a wonderful lustre and depth of expression.

"Fine woman," thought Mr. Delaine, moved by an impulse of admiration, but in spite of her good looks she did not please him as he marked the affected languor and absorbing self-consciousness of her manner.

Since that first visit it was only reluctantly that the honest Englishman was led by Sebastian, in compliance with his mother's wishes, into the semi-lighted drawing-room. Being the only male stranger which had come her way since her retirement to San Rocco, she hailed his visits with great pleasure.

That she should be compelled to lead the life of a recluse was now her great grievance. She had occupied a prominent place in the circles of frivolity and pleasure for too long a time during her life to be able to resign herself cheerfully to end it in the monotony of an elderly invalid lady's existence.

As soon as Mr. Delaine heard of Miss Jones' wish for painting lessons, he hurried off to the Delpianos' villa and out with it to Sebastian, describing the young lady in question in such glowing terms (he only knew her by sight and hearsay from Mrs. Vere) that Sebastian on the spur of the moment said yes, only to regret having done so when Mr. Delaine had already gone off to carry his answer to the hotelkeeper's wife. It was too late, though ; he could not retract, and there was nothing else for him to do than to answer the very polite little note sent him by Lady Emily, in which she thanked him for so kindly consenting to give her daughter lessons, by presenting himself the next day at the Hôtel d'Angleterre to arrange about the said lessons. He was graciously received by Lady Emily ; his quiet gentlemanly manner and refined appearance impressed her favourably. There was none of the self-conscious bumptiousness about him which she thought necessarily belonged to artists of renown but of obscure origin, who have pushed their way upwards. On Ginevra he made no impression at all ; he was simply "the painting master," like all the others who had given her lessons, not more individually interesting than her painting blocks or palette. She showed him her little attempts at sketching with a charming frankness of disgust at her own handiwork. It was arranged that, to lose no time, as

the Jones' stay at San Rocco was limited to another month, the lessons should begin the very next day. That evening, when sitting beside his mother's sofa reading aloud to her the "high life" gossip out of the Viennese paper, which was the only thing which interested her, there was another presence in the room which absorbed Sebastian's thoughts. He scarcely knew what he read, and to the irritation of Madame Delpiano, kept making slips and mistakes in the stuff he was giving utterance to. The invisible presence was that of a young girl with sun-kissed hair and great innocent blue eyes.

CHAPTER V.

THE first moment Sebastian saw Ginevra, that wicked little urchin who wields the weapons with such deadly power in his soft rosy fingers had drawn the bow, and the shaft had sped with unerring aim straight into a new victim's quivering heart. In such a case what is the use of all the reasoning, all the logic in the world? What did it avail Sebastian that he told himself twenty times a day it was folly, yes, even madness, in him to cherish a love for this beautiful young English girl, belonging to quite another world than his own? At the very idea of any one guessing his secret, the burning blood would rush to his cheeks. Then, turning on the screw of self-torture, he would picture her knowing it and ridiculing his presumption. Her aristocratic mother would even feel offended, of that he was sure. Then, even casting aside all the considerations of birth and position, was there not a shameful barrier for ever set up between him and a realization of any pure dream of love? Was not he his mother's son? Though innocent, he was condemned to suffer for the guilty. But in spite of these fits of despondency, there were moments during which Sebastian tasted the delights of a lover's paradise. When he was with Ginevra all bitter thoughts vanished; he gave himself up wholly to the enjoyment of seeing her and listening to her. Ginevra was enthusiastic about her sketching lessons, and really made considerable progress. She was accompanied always by old Mrs. Vere, Lady Emily's bronchitis prevention cure forbidding her to take much exercise beyond pottering about the hotel garden. The old lady saw nothing of the romance going on under her blue spectacles, and indeed how could she have imagined that the silent-tongued, shy-

mannered painter had fallen desperately in love with his bright young pupil? It was Ginevra who did most of the talking during these sketching expeditions. She chattered away freely to her master, whom she had grown to like and to take an interest in outside the painting lessons. Mrs. Vere had told her about his devotion to his invalid aunt and his kindness to the poor of San Rocco. One day Ginevra had suddenly said, "I have heard your aunt is a great invalid; I hope she is better to-day," and had been surprised at Sebastian colouring crimson and answering shortly, "Thank you, she is better," and he had then bent down his head and commenced mixing furiously the colours on his palette. The girl had the consciousness she had said something she oughtn't to have said, and felt much perplexed. That evening she confided this perplexity to Perkins, the maid, who was brushing her long golden hair with loving carefulness. Perkins had held Ginevra in her arms as a few hours' old baby, and worshipped her accordingly.

"Lor', miss," replied Perkins contemptuously, "furriners are all queer; there's nothing straight about them. Maybe his haunt is not his haunt," with which dark saying Perkins relapsed into silence.

"Not his aunt, Perkins!" cried Ginevra with great interest, wheeling round, by which movement she loosed her hair from Perkins' grasp, and it fell in a sunny shower on her shoulders. "What is she, then? Do tell me. I am sure you know all about them, you do look so knowing. Now tell me quick everything."

"Why do you take such an hinterest in them, miss?" responded Perkins with a shade of suspicion, and then with a little bit of vicious satisfaction she went on: "Folks do say hit's 'is mother as he 'as got up there, and is ashamed of her for some reason or other; to my mind not at all a nice sentiment in a son, though for that she may be no better than she should be. All furriners are alike. I don't know anything more about them, miss, than what I've told you, and I don't want to, neither. A sickly-looking, sour-faced gentleman Mr. Piany is to my thinking, and as for his painting, miss, why, you do it a great deal better."

"That is quite absurd, Perkins," cried her young mistress, with a touch of asperity in her voice, "and his name is not Piany, but Delpiano. What you say about foreigners being all deceitful and bad isn't true, for if you read your history books you will see

there have been a great many splendid good men belonging to other nations besides English."

But Perkins would not allow herself to be beaten on this point. "I know nothing about history, miss, nor cares for them that's dead and gone long ago. I have my heyces and can see with them, and all these years her ladyship has been taking me about, long before you were born, Miss Ginevra, I have seen what furriners are like. Mighty big in their talk, oh, dear; they will swear the heavens down to prove they are paragons of all the virtues, but they are nought better than the tinkling brass and the sounding cymbal the Bible tells us of as a warning." Here Perkins stopped, out of breath, and fell to brushing her young mistress's hair again, which operation she had momentarily suspended in her excitement.

All the effect of her eloquence was that Ginevra began to laugh heartily. "You dear old Perkins," she said, "there is no good arguing with you, only I know Mr. Delpiano is good and true, and nice, and that he would not do anything bad or mean, and what you say about his aunt being his mother is nonsense, of course."

Perkins snorted, but thought it better to let the matter drop there. Miss Ginevra was a spoilt child, and would have her own way and believe her own opinion to be the right one; but oh, why had her ladyship allowed these painting lessons?

CHAPTER VI.

IN the meanwhile a great change had taken place in Sebastian. The old apathy, the inertness which had paralyzed his capabilities, had departed as darkness does before the rosy dawn of day. The new love which filled his heart gave him fresh vigour, impelled him to activity. Life for him since Ginevra had entered into it was again full of interest, of aims and ambitions; he would be great for her sake; would show what he could do; please God, win fame yet if it were not too late. He felt all the capacity now of doing great things and was full of a restless and feverish activity. Just at that time his mother's health had improved so much that there was no longer a necessity for his constant attention to her. Up at sunrise he was out all day painting on those days on which he did not give Ginevra a lesson. It was now the month of March; a stormy one alike

on the Mediterranean as elsewhere. For three days a fierce mistral had raged, lashing the seas to fury. The great waves thundered unceasingly day and night on the shore, tossing their snowy crests in wild revelry high into the misty grey air. In the chaos of the elements Sebastian's soul kindled with enthusiasm ; he would paint the storm he so loved, and if he failed to infuse into the picture that which he felt, well, then for ever would he throw his brush away ; better die than fail, he thought, in a passionate yearning for an escape from the thralldom which had held him so long. And now the picture was finished, and looking at it Sebastian said to himself, " I have not failed." With a thrill of delight, a wild hope arose in his breast, to be extinguished the next moment by the chill reflection : " What good will it do me if I regain my place amongst the famous ? Even if I were to become the greatest of all living artists, would that bring me any nearer to Ginevra or wipe out the shameful stain with which my mother has tainted me, and which has poisoned my life ? "

Mr. Delaine had taken a tremendous interest in the progress of the picture. " It will be splendid, my dear fellow," he kept saying. " I should like to see the critics put their heads together over it when it hangs on the exhibition walls, for of course you will send it to Turin for the Art show the end of next month. Your name will be in all the Italian papers, my dear friend, and I shall be proud of you, eh ! " The kind-hearted man had not failed to notice the change in Delpiano, the new life and vigour in him and the absence now of the dreamy melancholy which had settled on him. What had caused the change ? and the matter interesting him he tried hard to understand it. Through Mrs. Vere he became acquainted with the Jones' about this time. Her ladyship was gracious to him ; seeing him so simple, so unassuming, she did not find it necessary to snub him or remind him he had to do with a sister of the present Duke of Shropshire. Mr. Delaine was delighted with Ginevra ; had he been a younger man, he would have fallen in love with her ; as it was, protected by his three-score years, he only admired her immensely in a paternal sort of way. One day he had come into the painter's studio unexpectedly, and had found him busy with Ginevra's portrait. Sebastian had coloured crimson, he could not hide what he was doing, and felt his secret betrayed to the other man. In this he was right, for the rapid glance in which Mr. Delaine took in

the picture and the confusion of the painter revealed all to him. "Whew! poor fellow," he thought, "that's it, is it? Well, I *am* sorry, for no good will come of it, I'm afraid, for him." His silence and a certain look of awkwardness with which he stared at the picture angered Sebastian, and provoked him to say abruptly:

"Look here what I am doing; I am trying to paint the face whose reflection I carry with me always here," he touched his breast. "I love her to distraction, so help me God!"

Mr. Delaine was startled with the frankness of the avowal and did not find a ready answer; words of congratulation his honesty forbade him utter, and yet he did not want to appear unkind. What he said after a short pause was:

"Well, it is only natural; she is very sweet, and you have caught her likeness admirably," which indeed he had, for every detail of the fair girlish face had been faithfully rendered with a lover's minute observation.

Sebastian made no answer, but turned the picture round as if to hide it from all intruding gaze. His mouth quivered and there was a look in his brown eyes as of some dumb animal in pain. Not a word more was said between the two men about the picture; Mr. Delaine began talking of other things, and gradually Sebastian outwardly recovered his equanimity, and never afterwards did Mr. Delaine refer to his visit to the studio that day:

CHAPTER VII.

"LADY SUSAN writes, Harry is coming out this week to Monte Carlo with a friend, and he will come over here to see us, so we may expect him one of these days."

The speaker is Lady Emily Jones and she addresses her daughter, who is bending her pretty blonde head over an unfinished sketch she is working at in the recess of one of the windows. The waiter has just brought in the morning's post and Lady Emily has been reading her letters—this one of her friend's with particular satisfaction, for in addition to the information of Lord Cringeltie's advent on the Riviera is this post-script: "My boy is longing to see Ginevra again; *entre nous*, my dear, I believe she is the only girl he thinks at all about." Here followed some expressive points of exclamation. Lady Emily was radiant; were her plans to be crowned with an even speedier fulfilment than she had anticipated? And did it depend

on Ginevra if they were? Rather anxiously did Lady Emily watch the effect of her announcement. Ginevra looked up from her painting and held her brush suspended for a minute.

"Harry coming here, mamma? Oh, that's nice; it will be fun seeing him again and hearing about all the tigers he has shot and all his adventures."

Was Lady Emily satisfied? No, hardly; she found Ginevra did not display sufficient delight at the news. All of a sudden, with an unaccountable touch of irritability, she was moved to say:

"I wish, child, you were not so utterly absorbed in that painting of yours; you think of nothing else, and one can't even get you to talk; you are always poring over your sketching, and it is not good for you. I think you have had enough lessons now and we might stop them for this last fortnight that we are here."

"Oh, please, mamma darling, don't say that," cried Ginevra quite excitedly. "I do love them, and I feel I am getting on. Mr. Delpiano says so, and it is all thanks to him if I can paint at all."

Lady Emily was now decidedly displeased.

"Don't talk in that exaggerated way, child; how can you *love* a painting lesson? Besides, when Harry is here you won't have time for them; we can then make all sorts of excursions, which one can't do comfortably without a gentleman of the party."

"I am glad Harry is coming, but if he is going to stop my lessons then I'd rather he stayed away," said Ginevra with the petulance of a spoiled child.

"That is nonsense," returned Lady Emily sharply. "If I say you have had enough lessons there is an end of it. Ginevra, I don't understand your being so unkind about Harry."

Ginevra looked ashamed and repentant.

"I didn't mean to be unkind," she said; "but you will let me go on with my painting lessons, there is a darling mother?"

She got up, and going behind Lady Emily's chair, put her soft young arms round her neck and gave her a kiss. "Little coaxer," replied her mother evasively, but Ginevra was happy for she thought she had gained her point.

* * * * *

It is a week since Lord Cringeltie arrived at San Rocco; can it be really only eight days of this intolerable wearing misery which is causing Sebastian's cup of bitterness to overflow? From the moment he heard through Mr. Delaine of the young man's

arrival at the Hôtel d'Angleterre a presentiment had taken hold of him ; he seemed to see it all clearly ; this was the man Ginevra was to marry ! Were they not suited for each other ? Both young, good-looking, rich in all this world's goods, why should they not love each other ? The painting lessons had been stopped ; Lady Emily had been firm in this, and Ginevra's pouts and protests had been all in vain. So the short hours of a fitful happiness were over for Sebastian ; another week and the Jones' would be gone, and these last months would seem but a dream ; the pain of the awakening alone would remain. Well, was he not accustomed to suffer ? Some day it would be all over, and then when once he was at rest beyond the reach of earthly misery, what would it matter what had gone before ? He was a fool to care now.

The first time he had met Harry and Ginevra together walking in the olives, laughing and talking away, he had felt a pang as if he had been mortally wounded. The sense of physical pain was such as made him stop short and give a gasp for breath. He was coming from the sea-shore, on his way home, his easel in one hand and his finished sketch under his arm. When she saw him, Ginevra said a few words in an undertone to her companion and then hurried forward with one of her brightest smiles.

"Mr. Delpiano, this is my friend, Lord Cringeltie ; he knows all about you from me. Do please let us see what you have been painting."

Sebastian bowed stiffly, and the young Englishman lifted his cap. Without a word he turned the face of the picture he was carrying towards them. A cry of admiration escaped the girl's lips.

"Oh, how too beautiful, isn't it, Harry ? Just look at those great waves ; they make one feel almost frightened, they are so real and terrible ; and that piece of drift-wood floating on the top of the water, isn't it a bit of some poor ship which has once gone to pieces on those cruel-looking rocks ? I always think to be drowned would be the most dreadful death, to feel yourself powerless, taken hold of by the great surging water which is going to drag you down, down. To me the sea in a storm always seems a live thing, some terrible monster hungering after human lives and never satisfied."

Delpiano's eyes flashed. Yes, that was just his thought also ;

they had these ideas in common, though she was so immeasurably distant from him.

Lord Cringeltie laughed.

"Dear Gina, what an imagination you have; water to me can look only water, however rough it may be. It is deuced unpleasant, though, to have to swim for your life in it as I did the other day off Columbo, when my boat capsized."

Sebastian heeded him not, a sudden idea had seized him.

"Miss Ginevra," he said, "would you like to come down this evening to the rocks? We have full moon now, and the sea looks splendid in the moonlight; the waves are still big from yesterday's storm. If you care about it, I will ask Mrs. Vere to come, and if you will let me I will show you the best place for seeing the waves break."

"Oh! that will be delightful," cried Ginevra; "won't it, Harry? Think! a storm by moonlight. Oh, I do hope mamma will let me go."

"I'm awfully sorry, Gina," replied the young man, "but I promised Tomlinson I would dine with him and one or two other fellows at Monte Carlo to-night. I might send him a wire, though," added he meditatively: "'prevented coming through urgent business.'"

"Oh, no! you mustn't do that," cried Ginevra gaily, "for when Mr. Tomlinson discovers what the urgent business was—sitting with me on a rock by moonlight—he would never forgive either of us. You must go and dine with him as you promised, there's a good boy, and we can go another night again to the rocks."

Sebastian was conscious of an insane joy, which made his pulses throb and his heart swell with an immense gratitude to Ginevra. If she cared for this titled coxcomb she would have approved his putting off his dinner party for her sake, and not bid him go. In his blind jealousy Sebastian was naturally unjust towards the object of it, for coxcomb certainly did not apply to simple-minded, jovial Lord Cringeltie.

"Well, Gina," said this young man, "don't you think it is time for us to move on? If we are going up to that old tower you want to show me, and which is certainly a mile off still, we'd better be going."

"All right, Harry," replied the girl, and turning again to

Sebastian she said : " Well, then, Mr. Delpiano, I leave it to you to arrange with mamma and Mrs. Vere about to-night. Good-bye."

English fashion, she gave him her hand, which Sebastian could never take in his without a little thrill of pleasure, and yet he hardly dared to give the least pressure to the soft fingers.

While Ginevra and Harry were still scrambling up the steep scrub-clothed hill, on whose summit the old Saracen tower stood, Sebastian, whose eagerness had carried him with winged feet to the Hôtel d'Angleterre, was sitting in Mrs. Vere's *salon*, begging the old lady to persuade Lady Emily to sanction the moonlight expedition. The ill-suppressed excitement in his manner, the importance he seemed to attach to such a trivial matter, made Mrs. Vere wonder a little, and after he was gone (with the promise of getting an answer sent up to his villa in the course of the afternoon) puzzle over his behaviour, so different from his ordinary reserve.

" Well, it is no affair of mine," sighed the old lady, in conclusion, to her ruminating whether it was possible Delpiano could have fallen in love with his pupil. She herself had made a love match against the wishes of her relations, and never regretted it. The man she had chosen had been poor and not equal to her in position ; and naturally disposed to be romantic and unpractical, she could not be expected to share the feelings of a Lady Emily Jones. She felt no indignation at the painter's presumption, as that lady would have called it, nor would she have given that hard name to the sentiment she suspected, and for which the poor fellow was not responsible. Accordingly, moved by a very gentle feeling of pity, she set off to Lady Emily's apartments as bearer of Sebastian's request. Lady Emily had one of her colds, not quite bad enough to necessitate her going to bed, but sufficient to keep her at the fireside wrapped up in shawls and rugs and grumbling at the draught which blew in through the crevices of the ill-fitting hotel windows. Outside the mistral was blowing freshly ; it had swept away all the storm clouds of yesterday from off the face of the now brilliant blue sky. Lady Emily was glad to see her visitor, she had been feeling a little moped all by herself. The last assortment of books Mudie had sent out had not proved interesting to her ladyship's taste.

" Stupid people those booksellers are, and in a place like San

Rocco, where there is nothing to do, one is so dependent on one's books to pass the time." She was glad of a little chat with Mrs. Vere, and of course the conversation of the two ladies began with the weather and the mistral—a direct personal grievance Lady Emily felt it to be. "How can one get rid of one's bronchitis, dear Mrs. Vere, with that horrid wind blowing all round one? Don't you feel the draught? it makes me shiver. Really, I don't think I can stay another week at this hotel. I believe San Rocco is the windiest place along the coast, and this house the worst built in the place; if this wind does not stop we must really go away. I think the day after to-morrow we have been here now three months, and I feel I want a change. If I do not go away at once I know I shall be laid up."

Mrs. Vere was full of sympathy with Lady Emily's troubles and of regrets at her contemplated departure from San Rocco. "And your daughter will, I am sure, be quite distressed at having to leave here," she said in conclusion. "She is so devoted to the place, and seems to have enjoyed her time here so thoroughly. By-the-bye, would you let me take her this evening to the rocks to see the waves by moonlight? It is really a lovely sight, and what a pity you are not able yourself to go out in the evening, Lady Emily. I saw Mr. Delpiano to-day, and he told me he had met your daughter and Lord Cringeltie, and there had been some talk about going to the rocks by moonlight, and Ginevra had wished very much to go. He would go with us, for of course it is better to have a gentleman with one when one goes out in the evening here, and he knows the rocks thoroughly, and he will take us to the most sheltered place."

Oh! Mrs. Vere, from whence did you get the serpent's wile to mix with the innocence of the dove?

Lady Emily, believing wholly in the innocence of her companion, answered graciously, "It is very kind of you, Mrs. Vere, to think of taking Ginevra. I will let her go on the condition you do not let her stay out long, please, and don't let her climb into any dangerous places, she is such a thoughtless child."

"Oh, you needn't be at all afraid, Lady Emily; I will take the greatest possible care of her."

"What a pity Harry has to go and dine with his friends at Monte Carlo to-night," said Lady Emily musingly. "Or he

could have gone with you and there would be no need of troubling Mr. Delpiano."

"What a nice young man Lord Cringeltie is," said Mrs. Vere diplomatically, it also being her sincere opinion, for she had been taken with his cheerful frankness and good-looking, open face.

Started on what was just then her favourite topic, Lady Emily became discreetly eloquent, and Mrs. Vere was still seated in the *salon* when the two young people returned from their scramble. After a little general conversation, Ginevra said:

"Well, mammy darling, may I go to the rocks to-night? I am sure Mrs. Vere couldn't say no to any one; she is not accustomed to it, not possessing a troublesome daughter, so I don't even ask her if she will take me for I know she will if you let her."

Mrs. Vere smiled brightly at the girl in acknowledgment of the pretty little compliment to her good-nature, and Lady Emily said graciously:

"Yes, deary, you may go. Mrs. Vere asked me about it. I don't see any objection if you wrap up well and don't stay out long."

Ginevra was radiant. With her young, fresh nature, little pleasures were sufficient as yet to fill life with perpetual sunshine for her; she did not know or understand aught of the dark side of life's picture, which seemed to her to be painted all in bright colours.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THIS monotony is perfectly sickening. I feel it is quite impossible for me to go on living as we do. I had much rather die. Why did you bring me to this horrible place, Sebastian? I believe you did it on purpose to punish me."

Here the shrill voice of Madame Delpiano broke down in sobs; she covered her powdered face with her handkerchief, and lay thus on her *chaise longue*, presenting an image of dire distress which at any other time would have touched her son's soft heart; but now his whole spirit rose in revolt against the injustice, the cruelty, of his mother's egoism. Standing opposite her, leaning against the mantelpiece, motionless and silent, he had listened to the storm of regrets, passionate longings and unkind reproaches, with which the foolish woman bewailed her fate. After thirty years of a brilliant existence,

to have to end it like this in the obscurity of a miserable fishing village! The storm had been brewing for some time past. With her improved health the old restlessness had returned, the craving after amusement. Her old life in the gay Austrian capital was ever in her mind; time had dulled the remembrance of any bitterness she had felt at becoming *passée*, at seeing the court she had once reigned over dwindle away little by little. Now, what had been still pleasant remained only in her recollection. Why should not she and Sebastian go and live in Vienna? There there could be no reason for concealment of their true relationship; no one would wonder at the existence of a son whom it had been her good pleasure to disown till a convenient moment arrived for producing him. It would be even to Sebastian's advantage, she argued foolishly, if he really possessed the genius he had been supposed to. What a field there would open to him to display it and to become famous. And once possessed of this idea she could think of nothing else. As yet she dared not say anything positive about it to her son, but began by hinting a change of scene would be beneficial to both of them that neither of them were meant to lead secluded lives, apart from all intercourse with the world; but Sebastian had never responded to these remarks, except with, "Well, mother dear, I think we are very happy here, and it would be unwise of us to try and begin another mode of life now." There were times when Madame Delpiano bitterly regretted having taken the false step as she called it, of seeking out her son; it had been rashly done, but, for some obscure reason or other, she had fancied she would have found him more like her herself, more in sympathy with her wholly frivolous nature. His very superiority to her, his goodness, his austerity of principle irritated her. "Duty is everything with him," she often thought bitterly; "if he did not refuse to take me in it was because duty bade him give his mother a home, and duty again bids him take every care of me now; but if I were to die to-morrow, how glad he would be; he would feel as if a heavy burden had been lifted off his shoulders. He and I are as wide apart in thoughts and sympathies as if there were no tie of flesh and blood connecting us." She had bitterly resented Sebastian refusing to acknowledge their true relationship, and making her pass as his aunt. "It is for your sake and for father's memory," he had said simply. "Your coming back to Italy after every one

believed you dead would excite such comment that the whole story would be raked up afresh, and poor father's misfortune become a matter of public gossip. We will bury the past, mother dear, and never refer to it again ; it will be best so." That Sebastian had given up all his brilliant prospects and devoted himself entirely to nursing her, instead of touching had angered her. " He is ashamed of me," she thought angrily, " or he would never have done such a thing as to bury himself alive in this way."

Between her and Sebastian there had never passed a word as to the real reason of his leaving Turin so abruptly ; but when he had said during that first interview between them—so painful to both of them—" I think the best thing we can do, mother, is to travel about for a time ; I don't think you will like Turin, and I shall be glad of a change," all she had said was, " Yes, you are right," but she had understood.

And now the time had come when Sebastian was to learn that his sacrifice had been made in vain, and from his mother's own lips. On that evening, for some reason or other, she had worked herself up into a state of nervous exasperation and discontent, which robbed her of all self-control, and she had given vent to all the bitterness she had so long and secretly nursed. On Sebastian's heart every word fell like the stab of a knife. She had heaped up her reproaches, telling him she believed that with a view of punishing her he had condemned her to a life which he knew would kill her sooner or later ; that he was her jailor ; that she wished she had never come back to him, it had been folly on her part, that fond wish to be with her child once more ; that child despised and insulted her ; she might have known it would have been thus, he was his father's son, every bit of him, cold, implacable, self-righteous, and then she had stopped, exhausted by her own violence, and Sebastian had not found a word to answer her with, though his whole heart was crying out in passionate protest. The only sounds now in the dimly-lighted room were the muffled sobs of Madame Delpiano and the loud ticking of the clock on the mantel-piece. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, chimed the clock in deep, sonorous tones, and Sebastian started. At nine o'clock he had promised to be at the Hôtel d'Angleterre to fetch Mrs. Vere and Ginevra. Quickly he went up to his mother's sofa and bent over her.

" Mother," he said very gently, " I must be going now. If you

think over what you said to me just now, I think you will acknowledge you have been a little hard on me. I have tried honestly to be a good son to you, and that I have failed to be a help or comfort to you in any way is my misfortune rather than my fault. I was born under an unlucky star. In whatever I try to do I fail, apparently."

The fact of Sebastian intending to go out that evening and leaving her alone had been an additional grievance with Madame Delpiano, so now all she said was, pettishly:

"Go away to your friends, Sebastian; I shall be glad to be alone."

Sebastian turned away and without a word left the room.

* * * * *

"Oh, how glorious it is! how glad I am we came!" So cries Ginevra.

She and Sebastian are standing together on a great pile of glistening rock which rises up out of the seething water below, and connected with the land by a narrow causeway of rocks. Mrs. Vere and Mr. Delaine, who had met the party on their way down and attached himself to it, have preferred keeping within the shelter afforded by the little chapel dedicated to San Rocco, the patron saint of the village, and which is perched upon the very extreme limit of the land, the sea washing the base of its grey weather-stained walls. The wind has been increasing in violence during the afternoon, and has lashed the sea into a foaming fury. Up in the clear sky the full moon is shining with an intense brightness, making a broad golden pathway across the troubled surface of the sea. On come the great foam-crested waves, one after another, leaping and surging in frenzied haste to break with a sound of thunder on the rocks, sending thin clouds of spray shorewards. The summit of the rock on which Ginevra and Sebastian are standing is high above the waves which pour over its lower ledges; the spray is blown fresh and salt in their faces, and makes their cheeks wet.

It was Ginevra's wish to climb up to the place in spite of Mrs. Vere's gentle remonstrances.

"Mr. Delpiano will go with me, and so you needn't be afraid," the girl had said persuasively, and Mrs. Vere had said no more.

Sebastian had held Ginevra's hand as he helped her along from

one boulder to another of the rocky causeway, and now he stood by her side and ought to have felt in heaven for the moment ; but try as he would, he could not shake off the feeling of the sickening disappointment which the cruel scene he had just gone through had left behind. He felt annihilated with the suddenness of the collapse of his delusion. She had hated him all along, then ; if she did not hate him she never could have spoken as she had done. She wished to be rid of him ; he was in her eyes only an obstacle hindering her from returning to the life she longed after. And yet if he were no longer there, would she not perhaps miss him just a little ? There would be no one to care for her as he had done, and yet, after all, he had during these ten years of devotion to her only succeeded in making himself odious to her. In everything, then, he had failed, come short of what had been expected of him. Why not make an end of the life so useless to others and but a burden to himself ? What was there to live or hope for ? Nothing.

Ginevra had noticed Sebastian's more than usually grave, pre-occupied looks that evening. When he had greeted her there had been no quick lighting up of the dreamy eyes, no smile with which he was wont to show involuntarily his pleasure at seeing her. Ginevra was very quick of perception, and therefore she knew that her master liked her and was glad to be with her, but was far from guessing that he was in love with her, as she might have done had she been older and more experienced. As yet she did not trouble her young head about such things ; she was still a careless, happy child, to whom each day brought sufficient enjoyment to occupy all her thoughts, to the exclusion of all possibility of day-dreaming. Now on this evening she was enjoying herself thoroughly. It was something quite new to her, this storm by moonlight, and the roar and commotion around her filled her with childish excitement mingled with awe. The great waves seemed to her in the moonlight to take unreal fantastic shapes, and to be tossing their long white arms upwards as if trying to seize her—her fancy of the sea being some cruel, insatiable power again took hold of her imagination, now more vividly than ever. And yet, drawn by some peculiar fascination, she made a step forward on the slippery rock, and stood on the extreme edge looking down at the boiling sea below. Sebastian caught her by the arm.

"For God's sake, Miss Jones, don't go so near the edge! One false step here and one would be beyond rescue."

His voice was quite thick with emotion. Ginevra shivered and suffered herself to be gently drawn back a few steps.

"It is wonderful," she said; "like Fairyland, you know. I can fancy I hear voices in the noise of the storm calling out of the depths of those great waves, 'Come down and see what we can show you below all the foam and surge. Down—down to where the coral grows on the silver sand, and the anemones unfold their feathery petals of blue and pink and amber, and the mermaids play in and out of the thickets of purple seaweed.' You know," she added apologetically, "I have read all about this in the 'Water Babies' and Andersen's 'Mermaid,' and that is what makes me think of it now."

"You like fairy tales, Miss Jones. Would you care to hear one now? one which I am sure you have never heard before. It will not take long to tell."

"Oh, yes," cried the girl, surprised. "I love all fairy stories."

In a low voice, so low that Ginevra had to bend her fair head towards him to hear amidst the noise of the wind and waves, Sebastian began:

"There was once a poor lad, so very very poor that he used to sit and cry aloud over his poverty, he felt so utterly miserable and solitary amongst all his neighbours, who each had their possessions, some greater, some smaller, but none of them gave anything to him or helped him.

"Then one evening as he was sitting as usual all alone thinking of his grief, a bright-robed fairy stood before him with a star on her forehead, and her name was Hope, and smiling, she said, 'Come with me. I will show you a place where you will find all that your heart desires; the way there is a long and difficult one, but if you keep your eyes fixed on me you will not grow weary or faint.' With that she floated away, and the lad began running after her, on and ever onwards, over stony ground which cut his feet, through brambles which lacerated his flesh, over hill and dale, till often he would fain have dropped down from sheer exhaustion; but with his eyes fixed on the bright star in front of him, he felt an irresistible power impelling him onwards. And thus he struggled all night long, and at day-break he had reached a swiftly-flowing river spanned in one

place by a single golden plank. On the opposite side, in a fragrant grove of ilex and myrtle, stood a fair white temple all shining in the glory of the rising sun, which kissed to flame the letters inscribed over the portal, 'The Temple of Fame.' On the marble steps leading up to it the poor lad saw hurrying to and fro eager groups, some ascending and some descending, the latter with proud victorious mien wearing laurel wreaths on their brows. Along the myrtle-bordered paths of the grove, lovely maidens walked hand in hand, and on them the victorious ones bent their looks, seeking for that sympathy which makes triumph taste sweetest. And as the poor lad looked, his heart swelled with longing. Hope stood on the other side beckoning him with a smile, and already he had placed with a beating heart one foot on the golden plank, when a mist rose suddenly out of the river veiling the opposite bank; thicker and thicker it grew, enveloping the poor lad in its icy fold, and a voice whispered mockingly in his ear: 'Fool, go back to your own place again where you were born and where you shall surely die. What would you here? Go back! go back!.' Trembling, the lad looked for the light which had guided him during the way, but it was hidden now. Then sick and faint he fell back and lost all consciousness; when he awoke, lo! he was in his old place again, and it was as if he had never left it save for the marks of the wounds on his hands and feet."

There was a silence of a few seconds. "Would she understand him? No, how could she? knowing nothing of the tragedy of his life, and yet if there should exist a bond of sympathy between them she might guess." Sebastian's heart beat in great throbs; at that juncture he had lost all power of calm reasoning; he was moved solely by an intense yearning after pity from her; more than pity he did not dare wish for; to see her look kindly and compassionately at him, to feel himself understood, would heal the bleeding wound his mother's cruelty had inflicted. The way he had told his story, the tone of his voice, the searching imploring look which met hers and seemed to hold it riveted by a sort of fascination, bewildered the girl. What did he mean? Why did he keep looking at her so strangely? She felt all of a sudden a little afraid of her companion and wished to get back to the others. A little nervously she said:

"What a sad fairy story yours is, Mr. Delpiano. I prefer those

with a bright ending. I never could bear the sad ones ; they made me cry when I was a little girl, but, of course, now I am not so silly ; still I don't like to hear about anything sad—ever."

Sebastian smiled bitterly. "Truth is sometimes sadder than fiction," he said quietly ; "but, please God, Miss Ginevra, you may never learn this yourself."

The solemnness of his tone puzzled and frightened Ginevra still more.

"Let us go back to the others," she said, and made a hasty step forward ; her foot slipped on the polished surface of the rock on whose edge she was standing, and with a little sharp cry of terror she fell down on to a sea-washed ledge some ten feet below.

Quick as thought, Sebastian sprang down beside her ; he did not lose his presence of mind though she clung to him in her terror screaming for help. His quick eye had caught sight of a little niche in the rock some two feet above them, just large enough to give a foothold ; there was not a second to be lost ; the great wave was rushing onwards which would flood the ledge with its foaming volume of water. He lifted her in his arms as if she had been a child and placed her feet in the niche.

"Hold on and you will be safe," he cried hoarsely. "God bless you, Ginevra."

The girl obeyed almost unconsciously and clung to the projecting piece of rock above her ; the same instant the wave broke, enveloping her in blinding spray. And now she heard the voice of Mr. Delaine above her, shouting, "Give me your hands, quick," and the next moment she felt them seized in a strong grasp and herself drawn up on to the top of the rock. But all she did was to cower down and stare at the seething water below with dilating eyes, and pointing downwards, gasped :

"Signor Delpiano. Save him." There lay the ledge below all clear swept and shining in the moonlight.

"Good God !" cried Mr. Delaine, "is it possible ? He is beyond all earthly help, then, now."

A great sob rose in his throat ; it was too horrible to know that his friend was now but a plaything of those cruel waves which were tossing hither and thither against the jagged edges of the rocks. Ginevra's cries for help had brought him and Mrs. Vere hurrying to the spot. From their nook on the chapel platform

they had not seen the accident. And now, overcome by the horror of the thing, Ginevra began weeping bitterly; Mrs. Vere knelt beside her holding her in her motherly arms and coaxing her to come away, but with no avail. Now she appealed to her old friend to help her.

"You must take her away from here; she mustn't stay any longer."

Mr. Delaine lifted the girl to her feet and drawing her arm through his guided her gently but firmly along the slippery rocks to the chapel platform, Mrs. Vere bringing up the rear trembling in every limb. And so the little trio stand in the bright moonlight, which casts their shadows, preternaturally big, on the patch of coarse sea-grass in front of the chapel. Their eyes with one accord are riveted on that one little bit of sea between the rocks and the shore, and yet what can they expect to see there? Only when the storm has abated the sea will give up her dead, and it may be miles farther away along the coast that the poor mangled remnant of what has been once a human life will be cast on the shore. Mrs. Vere is the first to recover the entire consciousness of things; to the others what has happened seems some horrible dream in its overwhelming suddenness. She remembers now with a pang her promise of taking well care of Ginevra, and how she has fulfilled it. What will Lady Emily say? The only thing to be done now is to take the girl as quickly as she can be taken back to her mother.

An hour later, Ginevra is tucked up in the blankets, her mother and Perkins by her bedside, and a little pompous-mannered, gold-spectacled man, the doctor, feeling her pulse.

"Beyond the heightened temperature occasioned by the fright the young lady has had, I do not see that there has been any mischief done," he proclaims. "She must be kept quiet, and not allowed to take much or excite herself. I will write out a prescription for a soothing draught, and I will look in the first thing to-morrow." With that he bowed himself out of the room.

Ginevra, thoroughly exhausted, soon fell asleep, and all during the night the faithful Perkins, having persuaded Lady Emily to let her watch alone, sat by her darling's bedside, her honest heart tortured by remorse, retracting now when it was too late her sweeping condemnation of everything "furrin." Was it not one of the hated species who had saved her young mistress's life at the cost of his own? Blessed be his memory for ever.

CHAPTER X.

A LITTLE crowd of mourners is grouped round the freshly-dug grave in the Campo Santo of San Rocco. It is composed chiefly of rough fisher folks, who stand bareheaded, their red caps in their hands, while the tears pour down many a bronzed furrowed cheek. Women, holding little children by the hand, stand whispering to each other with awe-struck faces; some weep audibly. The priest is hurriedly gabbling over the concluding words of the burial service. Around him the little white-surpliced acolites gaze with awe-filled eyes into the grave where the black coffin stands. Near the grave stands a trio, composed of Mr. Delaine, the doctor, and Lord Cringeltie, sent by Lady Emily to represent her at the funeral of the man to whom she owed her daughter's life. Mr. Delaine is quite overpowered by the emotion he feels; the doctor is stiffly self-conscious, and Lord Cringeltie thoroughly uncomfortable. The painter's death had shocked and pained him immeasurably, and had awakened him to full consciousness of his own love for Ginevra. The thought that she too might have shared Sebastian's fate made him realize that life without her would lose all brightness for him. The Jones' are to leave the next day for Florence; much as Ginevra once loved San Rocco, now she hates it, and welcomes the thought of leaving it. To her mother she says little, but it is Perkins who hears the passionate regrets that they ever came to the place and who dries her tears over Delpiano's death. In that last cry, "God bless you, Ginevra!" in which Sebastian let escape the secret of his love, the girl had got a glimmer of the truth, though then she did not understand the full reason which had made Sebastian face death so resolutely, without any shrinking. Later on, with more knowledge of the world and human nature she understood, and with the knowledge the tender reverence with which she hallowed the painter's memory increased tenfold.

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And now, in the little cemetery, the mourners turn to depart. The priest has already hurried off, and the crowd slowly disperses, forming into little groups, which go their way homewards along the cypress-bordered path, along which such a short while ago the coffin was borne on the shoulders of six stalwart fisher-

men to its final resting-place. The poor folks have lost the friend who had been ever ready with purse and sympathy to help their needs, and they mourn his loss sincerely. And the *povera signora*, up there in the Villa Oleander, how much worse for her, losing the nephew who was so devoted to her. When the news of the accident had been brought to her, she had gone into a violent fit of hysterics, and these fits had recurred frequently during the following days. Her screams could be heard quite distinctly on the Piazza, where the fisher-folk were wont to bask in the sun, leaning against the parapet wall or lying full length on the ground. *Povera signora!* and the day when the body had been found by some coastguardsmen, washed ashore several miles down the coast, and brought home to her, she had gone from one fainting fit into another, till they all thought she would die also. Now she was very feeble, and the doctor and the *sorella* who had been summoned to nurse her shook their heads. Ah, no doubt, ere long there would be another funeral procession wending its way to the little Campo Santo in the valley shut in by olive-clad, sun-kissed hills.

* * * * *

A month later the Turin Exhibition of pictures opened. Mr. Delaine had seen that Delpiano's picture, the last one he had painted, had been sent there, according to his wish. The critics were unanimous in their enthusiasm. Here are the words of one of them:

"Once again the name of Sebastian Delpiano resounds throughout the world of art, but this time we take up our pen with a heavy heart. We, his countrymen, before all others, have to bewail the cruel fate which snatched him away on the very eve of his fresh triumph and robbed Italy of one of her greatest artists. We will not seek here to penetrate the mystery in which the latter years of the maestro's life were shrouded, or seek to discover what the influences were which laid a ban on his genius for a while. We respect the secret of the dead. Honour to whom honour is due, and we say with confidence that the memory of Sebastian Delpiano will live on for ever amongst us and those that come after us, as that of one whom Italy may be proud to call her son."

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Extract from a letter a year later from Lady Emily Jones to Mrs. Vere:

"MY DEAR MRS. VERE,—

"Thanks for your kind letter of congratulation. As you know Lord Cringeltie, you will understand that I am very pleased with my daughter's choice, and that I can be quite sure of her future happiness—he is such a thorough good fellow. I shall always look back with pleasure to our stay at San Rocco, and having thus made the acquaintance of one of my dear mother's oldest friends. It was so unfortunate, though, that sad accident occurring to cast a gloom over the last days of our stay there. I am happy to say Ginevra has quite recovered from the painful impression poor Signor Delpiano's shocking death caused her; at her age it is so easy to forget. If you are in London the end of May I hope you will come to the wedding. Ginevra sends you her best love.

"I am, dear Mrs. Vere,

"Yours sincerely,

"EMILY JONES."

B. E. K.

Curiosities of Chartism.

By GEORGE MORLEY,
Author of "THE REVOLT OF STREPHON," etc.

DOUBTLESS one of the most powerful mob kings that England has ever been governed by, so to speak, during this century, was he who wore upon his crown the insignia of manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, the ballot, annual parliaments, abolition of property qualification and payment of members.

This king, which ultimately proved such a monster, was enthroned by Mr. Thomas Attwood, M.P., a Birmingham banker, who began the Chartist movement as a step towards the establishment of a one pound paper currency. Too soon, however, this gentleman found that it is one thing to create and quite another to subject. The thing he had created to assist him with his paper money chimera soon revolted from him and scouted his idea. He preached activity at first—and with mob kings activity is merely a fine name for violence—and when he saw how active his offspring had become, he counselled peace. It was then too late. The Chartist king was firmly seated upon his throne, and words alone were incapable of deposing him.

The Chartists drew up a petition to Parliament, setting forth their demands. The roll of paper was three miles long, and it contained no less than 1,250,000 signatures. It was about four feet in diameter when rolled up. It was girded round with hoops and drawn in a van ornamented with ribbons and banners, and was conveyed by Chartists, with rosettes in their bosoms, to the house of Mr. Fielden, Pantton Street, Haymarket, on Tuesday, May the 14th, 1839. If nothing more had been produced than this, it would have been enough to show that the Chartist king had a million and a quarter of subjects at his back, ready to do his bidding.

Mr. Fielden was not at home, but Mr. Attwood was in, and he received the deputation representing the monster he had created. He promised to present the ponderous petition to the House on Friday of that week. Then a curious question came up; what

was to be done with the three mile roll of paper? Mr. Attwood regretted that he had no room for it, nor would he venture upon the responsibility of taking care of it. They had better retain charge of it until the day of presentation. This suggestion did not please Mr. Fergus O'Connor, a prominent spirit in the Chartist government. It would, he said, be spoiling the whole business. It would look as if Mr. Attwood would have nothing to do with it, and in that remark Mr. O'Connor was perfectly right. The precious roll was ultimately taken in, and in due course made its entry into Parliament.

A Chartist was once told by a gentleman that the army, yeomanry and police, which were just then being generally inaugurated, would render all the efforts of the Chartists ineffective. To this the son of violence replied that the forces would be of no use, as the people could "Moscow," by every man setting fire to his own house! This was the doctrine of anarchy with a vengeance, and a development of the Chartist movement which, it may be safely assumed, its sponsors had not taken into consideration.

At the National Convention, held in London in May, 1839, a certain Dr. McDowall reminded the audience of what the people of France effected by the pike, and said that the pike was an excellent instrument for obtaining the gun. The blaze of the rocket brigade would be followed by the glare of the rural blaze. The incendiary doctor was right. In a short time the country towns and villages were aflame. The rural mind had caught alight; wrongs were to be righted; the poor were to change places with the rich; the pike and the torch were to work wonders. And work wonders they did, though not the wonders the Chartists had looked for.

Not only by sunlight did the Chartist king hold his court, but by starlight as well. It is to be noted that mobs of all sorts rather favour the night; it is a good cloak and a good covering for deeds that do not look well in the sunshine. The Chartists held starlight meetings in Black Horse Fields, Kingsland Road. The time for assembling was nine o'clock, and at this pre-nocturnal hour the men and women of Shoreditch were wont to come out in their hundreds to listen to the fiery speeches of Frost and Vincent—two notorious Chartists—in the Black Horse Fields.

Even into literary Fleet Street the mob king had extended his dominion. Here, in the Ship Yard, the followers of violence con-

gregated to plot and complot. The police made a descent upon "The Ship" one night, and arrested thirteen Chartists upon the deck. Six of them were armed with pikes, and one of them turned his weapon upon the limb of the law. They were all captured, however, and marched off to Bow Street.

Some of the most ardent spirits of Chartism were evidently intent upon sanguinary measures. At the great convention before alluded to, one Lovett, a leading light of the movement, made use of the following warlike remark:—"We are all on the edge of a precipice, and are resolved that the tyrants shall not march forward unless they pass over us. Sooner than yield to our oppressors, let England be a desert." England has happily not yet arrived at that forlorn condition, though doubtless England would have been a desert in the thirties and forties if good loyal citizens like Mr. Lovett could have had their own sweet way.

The chief weapon of the Chartists was a lethal one known as a pike. In the earlier days of the movement one of these weapons was seized by the police in the neighbourhood of Queenshead. It was shown at the magistrate's office in Halifax, and attracted considerable attention. Near the point was a hooked blade, similar to those used in the Irish Rebellion for the purpose of cutting the girths of horses; and at the butt end of the staff, a chain, to go round the body of the pikeman, to prevent it being taken from him. With these honest weapons the people of '39 sought to avenge "their wrongs," as they were pleased to call them. What a terribly unreasoning thing an imaginary grievance is, and to what lengths will it not run in the pursuit of what it considers a righteous vengeance! In mob warfare the pike has become historical.

On Whit-Monday, 1839, the gay city of Bath was in a state of warlike perturbation, owing to the threat of the Chartists to hold a field-day there. The authorities issued placards which stated that such meeting would be illegal. In addition to this notice, at a quarter to twelve, a regiment of cavalry was drawn up under arms in St. James's Square. Bath had quite a military air, and the lawless ones—of whom about three hundred, all decorated with ribbons and bearing flags with strange devices on them, marched down the town—saw that their power was gone in that quarter, so they went to a field at Mitford, on the borders of Wilts, and went

through their programme. There were upwards of two thousand riders in the field, and curious to relate a great portion were women, who were most energetic in preaching the doctrines of Chartism.

Women indeed were not passive onlookers in the game of disorder. They were as bellicose as the men and did not wait for the men to give them the cue. At Newcastle, the Chartists advised their members to withdraw their money from the savings banks—to buy pikes with, no doubt—and also hinted at a refusal to pay rent. The ladies of Newcastle wanted no further incitement. When the owners called upon their tenants for the May-day rent, the answer came in the true Chartist vein, "Wait till Moonda, and then we'll see whether t'hoose is yors or mine." This was not only a refusal to pay rent, but it was a threat to steal houses as well, which was one of the boldest schemes that even a Chartist dame could have premeditated.

No doubt the village blacksmiths of those days, much as it may have been against their inmost wishes, were in league with the warriors against order. Money was useful to them, and the manner of its acquisition may not have vastly troubled them. A son of Vulcan near Heywood had no qualms of conscience. For six months he was employed in making pikes and daggers; and such was the extent of the demand for these deadly instruments that sometimes he was obliged to engage two assistants. The pikes were sold at two shillings and three shillings each.

The Lancashire pike indeed seems to have been a fearful weapon, more lethal than those forged in the Midlands. The blade was of steel, and had a bayonet-like form at least a foot and a quarter in length, which screwed into a handle of wood three or four feet long, for the purpose no doubt of being used in that form as a lance. When the handle was off the weapon served as a dagger, the hands being completely protected by two short cross-bars, both ends of them being intended to be of great service in cases of riot; one being framed like a hatchet, to split peoples' skulls, and the other jutting out something like a scythe, to cut the reins of the soldiers' horses.

With these murderous weapons the Lancashire lads and lasses armed themselves to commit warfare against their fellow men. Amid such wicked and unreasoning conduct a piece of good advice from one of their countrymen should have come in good

season. Whether it did is uncertain, but the linen draper is none the less to be praised for his good intentions as well as his business tact. Upon a pile of shirts in his window the worthy descendant of John Gilpin affixed the following bill:

"He that hath not a shirt, let him sell his pike and buy one.
N.B.—Pikes taken in exchange at their full value."

Such advice ought to have been extensively followed, but when a reasonless demon holds sway over the mind no advice except that in unison with violence and the object sought after will be listened to; it is therefore to be feared that the sensible exhortation of the Lancashire linen draper fell on barren ears, and was read by people who, at that time, if they had a shirt, would have sold it and bought a pike, rather than have sold the pike and bought a shirt. Of such stuff are the followers of all mob kings made, and the Chartists were doubtless no exception to the rule, bad as the rule is.

If the weapons of Chartism were of a dangerous kind the literature and oratory of the order was no less vigorous. The eloquence that speakers impart to any great movement, lawful or lawless, in time takes a place in the literature of that country in which the movement occurs, and becomes historical. Such gems indeed as can be culled from the dross are worth preserving as showing the workings of the human creature's mind when in a state of agitation bordering on madness.

At a great Chartist meeting held at Manchester on July 13th, 1839, shortly after the notorious Birmingham riots, to which reference will be made directly, the chairman said:

"He could tell the meeting that Scotland was up. They had received news that evening that there were ten thousand men in arms upon the borders. The men of Newcastle and Carlisle also were up, and the hardy sons of the soil were ready to strike a blow at once."

A Mr. Butterworth uttered some very choice beauties of Chartism, of which two examples should certainly be immortalized:

"Let every man provide himself with a lump of tow, dipped in pitch, and half-a-dozen congreve matches, and every man of them would be an engine of himself."

'They must tell Lord John Russell that every wound the men of Birmingham had received should be paid back with interest;

for every wound, Lord John Russell should shed tears of boiling oil."

Leigh Hunt, or some other sharp critic of *The Examiner*, made a note of this, much doubtless to the chagrin of Mr. Butterworth.

"How Lord John Russell," he said, "is to be induced to shed tears of oil it is not easy to conceive. But perhaps this is Mr. Butterworth's notion of blubbering. To the instances of misnomers in Mr. James Smith's song should be added that of this Mr. *Butterworth*, who, set on the fire, seems so little addicted to the melting mood."

In vigour of language and boldness of advice even Mr. Butterworth was outdone by a Chartist named Rawson :

"He had advised them not to hurt the police, for which he had been called a coward ; but, by God ! he never for such an act would be called a coward again ; and instead of restraining the people, instead of advising them to indulge in no premature outbreak, he would say whenever the people were attacked by the bloody police, 'Have at them, lads !' He would advise them to meet force by force, even to the slaying of the vagabonds."

The Chartist ranks included all creeds of mankind, from the banker to the clerical demagogue, and from the clerical demagogue downward to the gutter fire-the-torch. Clergymen have from time immemorial taken their part in insurrections and revolutions, and this holy body was not unrepresented in the Chartist agitation. At the Manchester meeting the Reverend W. V. Jackson consecrated weapons for a consecrated object in the following words :

"He was sorry that the people of Birmingham were stopped when they were returning with the palisading of St. Thomas's Church ; he had nothing to regret but that they were prevented dispatching those base, bloody, military police. They were proceeding with consecrated weapons in a consecrated object."

The reverend gentleman then proposed a diet for the police : "If the police must be fed by the people, let them be fed with bullets," which was certainly demanding a great deal from the digestion of the unpopular police.

With such chaste orators to plead his cause the mob king stood in no danger of lacking recruits. Perhaps one of the best and noblest who seemed to be won over to his side, and who at least was found to speak up for the Chartist, was Lord Brougham,

"The Edinburgh Reviewer," who made a poet of Lord Byron owing to his severe criticism of the "Hours of Idleness."

In July, 1839, the mob king had loosed his myrmidons in the streets of Birmingham, and gave them the rein. They assembled in the Bull Ring of the town in which they were created by Mr. Attwood. It was perhaps fitting that the place where they were hatched should have a taste of their quality; should have a practical illustration of what the mob king and his monsters were capable of doing.

The first thing a mob does is to attack institutions that represent money. In the Bull Ring at Birmingham the first order given was to extinguish the lights. This was speedily done; the lamp heads were smashed, and the posts broken down. Then the regular looting began. The shops of obnoxious persons—and shopocracy always incurs the hatred of mobs—were uncereemoniously entered, and the goods thrown into the ring. To break down the shutters and doors the merry men of the Chartist king had torn up the palisading from around the Nelson Monument, and with these iron weapons they battered in the defenceless timber. When the pile of pillage reached the height of a miniature Ossa the torch was applied, and, as the flames rose high and lit up the Bull Ring with a frightful glare, the Chartists rent the air with their cries, as though they were cheering for a great victory.

Victory indeed; the victory of madness over the rational creature! From firing plunder to firing houses in which people are unsuspectingly sleeping is only one step in the stride of anarchy, and this step was taken by the Bull Ring rioters. They took the torch to several houses, and ruthlessly set them ablaze; and when a two-horse fire-engine drove up the firemen were compelled, on pain of death, to lash their horses off and leave the tenements to burn, and the inmates to escape the best they could. What fine work for a king and his men!

At last a tardy regiment of Dragoons clashed in with naked swords to do battle with the fiend Anarchy for the restoration of law and order. Two of the rioters were mortally wounded. A dragoon stabbed one in the neck, and the other was cut down by the sabre of a policeman. The damage done by the mob ere it could be checked amounted to a sum of £40,000; and to prevent a repetition of the outrage the Warwickshire Yeomanry

Cavalry were ordered out, and five thousand special constables sworn in. It was thus that the rampant mob king held his carnival in "the toyshop of Europe."

Two of the Chartists leaders, Lovett and Collins, were arrested and lodged in the historical gaol at Warwick, in the same place as where Captain Donnelan, the "laurel water poisoner," was incarcerated. It was on behalf of these two adherents of the mob king that Lord Brougham took up the cudgels in the House of Lords. Like other prisoners in the same prison, they were forced to submit to prison rules, and these they seem not to have admired. They had their hair cut, and had to take the usual bath. Effeminate ruffians as they were, they sorely complained of this treatment in a petition to Lord Brougham, and the celebrated author of "*Historical Sketches of Statesmen*" delivered a most stirring and singularly eloquent address on the wrong of subjecting untried prisoners to the severity which he maintained had been meted out to Lovett and Collins.

Sentences of transportation upon some of the Bull Ring rioters did not quite stamp out the power of the Chartists. The mob king pursued his now slowly conquering way from John o' Groat's to Land's End. Although he issued printed instructions to his followers as to how to burn houses down, with a "spoonful of vitriol, a spoonful of turpentine, and a spoonful of saltpetre mixed together," his reign was fast drawing to a close. To overthrow a dynasty like his was one of the greatest victories in mob warfare.

Vanitas Vanitatum.

FAITH is a strange, sad thing :

A blinding of the eyes with vapoury shrouds,
A sinking down to rest on treacherous clouds,
A quiet sleep when perils linger nigh.

—And yet I trust thee ! fond and foolish I.

Hope is a wild, weird thing :

A fierce pursuit of distant hurrying forms,
That beckon still through fires and deeps, and storms,
And can be neither grasped nor wholly lost.

—And yet I hope, though knowing well the cost !

Love is a false, fair thing :

A kind, sweet lie that hides a bitter truth,
An empty vision that deludes weak youth ;
A time of waking from such dreams must be,
Yet since I love thee, what is that to me ?

E. W. WOOD.

A Buried Sin.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BRAND OF SHAME.

SEEING that her presence would only be an embarrassment to Algernon Kent, Ruth now left the room. No sooner were the two men left alone, than Mr. Levison opened his escritoire and took therefrom a copy of the *Times*. Carefully unfolding it, he ran his eye down the columns till he came to a certain paragraph amongst the advertisements. He laid his finger upon this, and, handing it to Algernon, said, "Read!"

The advertisement ran as follows:

"*Elizabeth Hollingsworth*, who left the village of Knaresborough with her two young sons early in the year 1862, Will Hear of Something Greatly to Her Advantage by applying to Messrs. Watson and Sharpe, Lincoln's Inn. Any one giving information as to the whereabouts of the said Elizabeth Hollingsworth, or her next-of-kin, will be handsomely rewarded."

Algernon read, and handed the paper back, saying blankly, "What is all this to me?"

"We shall see," replied Mr. Levison. "This is the woman to whom Sir Reginald Thurlowe left a legacy of £5,000, which lies still unclaimed. She was a young woman at that time, cherry-cheeked and well to look at—he! he!—we were all young once. She had the good fortune to *interest* Sir Reginald Thurlowe; her eldest child was christened after him. In the course of a few years his *interest* flagged; he was attracted elsewhere. Bess Hollingsworth—we all called her Bess—was as proud as Lucifer, rode the high horse, and talked a deal of sentimental twaddle. I saw a great deal of her at that time; indeed, I was commissioned by Sir Reginald to pension her off—I generally managed these little delicate matters for him. He was always ready to behave handsomely, but this one wouldn't listen to reason. I had a terrible time with her, and one night her cottage was burnt down, and she and her children disappeared and never were heard of any more in Knaresborough. This was a great trouble

to Sir Reginald, who was very fond of the two little boys, especially the eldest, who was some years older than the baby, and wished to relieve her of all charge of them. Perhaps she thought he'd steal 'em, and so carried them off. Well, by Sir Reginald's desire, I advertised for her daily for weeks—the prettiest advertisement you ever read—but we had no news of her——”

“Again, I ask, what, in heaven's name, has all this to do with me?” interrupted the bewildered Algernon.

Without heeding this interruption, Mr. Levison continued:

“When Sir Reginald died, we advertised for her again, as you have just seen—no answers. She seemed to have faded out of the world like a shadow. Now I am coming to the point. A few months ago chance led me to make your brother *Reginald's* acquaintance; in compliance with his invitation I paid a visit to Kent House, and there Bess Hollingsworth and I stood once more face to face! *She* recognized *me*, and I recognized *her* in Mrs. Kent, the mistress of the mansion! I speak God's truth! Ask her and see.”

Algernon listened and turned white to the lips. He knew that Mr. Levison was capable of lying to any extent on any subject to serve his own purpose; but where would be the use of lying in a case like this, when his statement could be verified or contradicted by the one person most concerned in the course of a few hours?

Mr. Levison's earnest assurance, his manner of telling the story, struck Algernon with a horrible apprehension.

It was pitiful for any woman to have suffered so; but for *his mother*—deserted, insulted, outraged—to vanish in the night into the world's wilderness—to have fled with her children, like Hagar, into the desert! A cold hand seemed to grasp and freeze his heart. An instinctive feeling impressed him—*it might be true!* Thoughts come and go quick as a lightning flash. Small facts and slight remembrances, episodes in his earlier life, that seemed unimportant at the time and had not crossed his mind since, rushed upon his memory now. He recalled his mother's curious betrayal of interest in the Thurlowe family—remembered that neither he nor his brother had ever been encouraged, nor indeed allowed, to speak of their father; his mother had never mentioned his name, nor retained any memorial of him; any allusion to him had been angrily stopped! Ah!

so many trifling things, remembered now in a second's space, did more than Mr. Levison's words to rouse the question in his mind. When he finished speaking the two men stood looking with bitter hatred each upon the other's face ; then, with suppressed passion that had risen to white heat, boiling and surging through every nerve and vein till its very strength stilled it, Algernon said :

" If this story is true, and I will know before sunset, you are a malicious, cowardly cur to tell it to me ! If it is false, I will thrash you within an inch of your life, old as you are ! "

" Pooh ! If your mother had only—— "

" Don't dare to utter my mother's name," exclaimed Algernon with concentrated rage, " or I shall kill you ! "

" You are a fool to take things so ! It can do you no harm ; you are as good a man as though you had been born under the legalized banner of a bishop. Why, some of the highest in the land have had such a beginning as yours, and are not ashamed. Come, the story I have told you shall never pass my lips if you will only listen to reason. You can serve *yourself* and *me*, and nobody will be any the worse. You need take no trouble at all. I have planned everything—I shall act—you have only got to be silent."

" You can act for yourself, or the devil, your master," exclaimed Algernon. " I have nothing to do with you ; I go my own way." He turned to leave the room.

" Stay—one moment ! " said Mr. Levison, stretching out a detaining hand.

" Not one ! " exclaimed Algernon as he flung him aside with an impulse that sent him reeling, and impetuously left the room, and strode, with throbbing temples and beating heart, towards Knaresborough. He went direct to Sir Harold's study, who looked up and noticed the pallor and agitation of the young man's face. He asked no questions, but waited to be told if anything was wrong.

" Have you got the notes all right ? " were Algernon's first words.

" I'm not likely to let them go," Sir Harold said smiling.

" Well, keep them in some safe place," rejoined Algernon. " That old villain is capable of any ruse, any atrocity, to get possession of them."

" Trust me," replied Sir Harold with a confident smile.

"I shall not feel quite happy till we have set the legal machinery to work," said Algernon. "By-the-bye," he added, flushing, "have you ever seen—do you know anything about this—Elizabeth Hollingsworth?" He held the advertisement before him as he spoke. Sir Harold glanced at it carelessly.

"The person to whom my uncle has left five thousand pounds?" he said. "Yes, I know the name well enough. I have a sort of idea that I have seen her, many years ago of course—there was some scandal about her, if I remember right—poor woman! I believe she was rather badly treated, but the story is not a creditable one to our family. Has she been found?"

"Mr. Levison says *yes*. He says he has seen her. I am going down to Walmerstown to find out," replied Algernon gloomily. "It is annoying, this being Sunday, there are so few trains; but I shall go across country, take the six o'clock train to Romford, and there catch the mail train which passes through about midnight—and I shall be at Kent House before cock-crow."

Sir Harold saw that Algernon was not quite his usual self; but according to his Western ideas of good breeding he forebore to ask questions—if Algernon desired to take him into his confidence he would do so of his own accord; if not, it would be impertinent to make injudicious inquiries. The two men understood each other so well that there was no need of words to pass between them; indeed an electric cord of sympathy seemed to bind father, lover and daughter together. Algernon knew that wonder was stirring in Sir Harold's mind, and he had no idea of keeping any of his affairs concealed from him or Claire; but if there should be anything to tell, the one painful humiliation would be enough; it would be time enough to tell it, on the morrow.

"In any case, whatever happens, I shall not return *here*," rejoined Algernon, after a momentary pause; "but I shall be in town on Monday, that is to-morrow, by four o'clock; will you come to my chambers, and we'll have a talk and set the lawyers to work at once. There is no need for you to see the old man over there," he jerked his head towards Oakwood; "indeed I should scrupulously avoid him: he is full of cunning and devilry; there is no knowing what use he might make of your lightest word. You are no match for him! Well, I'll go now and have a talk with Claire; she'll be surprised at my starting off so suddenly to-day."

Claire was soon found ; love taught him the way to where she was lingering not far off, and they took a long ramble through the lovely woods in the neighbourhood of Knaresborough. The autumn sun was shining brightly to its last dying hour, sent its level rays through the skeleton trees already almost bare of their luxuriant summer foliage, and made a network of dancing shadows among the fallen leaves that rustled beneath their feet. Intuitively, with her quick perception, Claire knew there was something not quite right with Algernon. He was jerky and somewhat restrained in his manner, and when he told her he was going to leave Knaresborough by the six o'clock train, she stopped suddenly amid a shower of falling leaves, and said quickly :

"I know there is something wrong—I knew it the moment I saw you. What is it ? anything about papa ?" she added anxiously.

"No, dearest, nothing about the dear father," he answered.

"Oh ! come along, then—nothing else matters."

"Nothing !" he repeated as he took her two hands in his, and looking with tender gravity in her face.

"No—nothing," she repeated dauntlessly.

"Not if you were compelled to say 'good-bye' to me—and I to leave you ?"

"I would never say 'good-bye,' and I wouldn't let you go ; but see here, sir," she added, shaking her finger in playful warning, "of course you are going to Kent House on some family matter—well, I'm not going to ask you any questions about that *now* ; but don't burden yourself with a sack of family secrets in the future, for I am as curious as Eve, and by-and-by I will have them all emptied out ; I shall not let you keep the weeest, tiniest one for yourself !"

Their feet wandered through the tangled woodland paths, and their spirits revelled in the flowery ways of love, the ways that have been trodden by the dead-and-gone for ages past, and yet are as fresh to the living loves of to-day as would be a paradise new-made. Of course, before they parted, Algernon told her all that was going on in the matter that lay nearest to both their hearts, which promised to come to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion, but spoke no word of his own personal anxiety.

He carried out his intention, took the six o'clock train, caught the express at Romford, and reached Kent House before cock-crow. He wouldn't disturb the household ; there was no necessity

for that ; he watched the sun rise, then went into the farm-yard, and loitered about, till he saw the servants opening the shutters and beginning their daily work. Then, and not till then, he presented himself, much to the domestic amazement that he should arrive at such an unusual hour. Great was the family surprise when on entering the breakfast-room they found Algernon in possession. Reginald and his mother entered almost at the same moment.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Reginald, his good-natured face broadening into smiles as he cordially wrung his brother's hand. "My dear boy, this is a pleasant surprise."

"Why didn't you write?" said Mrs. Kent, coldly submitting her cheek to his filial kiss. "You know I hate to be taken by surprise."

"What's up?" said Reginald, helping his brother to some frizzling ham and golden eggs, and himself making a vigorous onslaught upon the good things before him. "You're too busy a man to have run down for the mere pleasure of looking at us. What's up, eh?"

"Strange things have happened at Knaresborough; and I have brought you the news. You both know the scandal, the long-ago scandal, about Sir Harold Thurlowe?"

"Yes," they exclaimed simultaneously.

"Well," he added, laying down his knife and fork and looking from one to the other to watch the effect of his words, "what do you think? That old villain—that unmitigated scoundrel, Levi-son, was at the bottom of it all; he is the real criminal; he committed perjury and forgery to compromise Harold Thurlowe; but he's found out at last." And he proceeded to give them an account of all that had happened. With graphic brevity he told them the whole story. Reginald sat listening in open-eyed wonder, too much taken aback even to bless his own soul. By the time Algernon had finished he had sufficiently recovered to be able in some degree to express himself.

"Why—why!" he exclaimed, "who would ever have thought of such a thing? He seemed such a good fellow too, the most Christian Jew I ever met; and—and we struck up quite a friendship, hot as nails."

"You are too easily attracted, too easily taken in," said Mrs. Kent.

"Oh, come, I say," said Reginald deprecatingly, "own up, mother! What about *you*? When I dropped in upon you, you and the old Jew seemed to be chumming so pleasantly, you looked as though you wished me farther off."

"I was obliged to be civil to my son's visitors," she answered coldly. "But I am not surprised at what Algernon tells me; an end must come to the career of the wicked, and I hope he will get his deserts."

"No fear of that," said Algernon, "while I am steering the ship."

"I should think not," rejoined Reginald, his admiration of his quondam friend speedily quenched. "If the law once gets his head in chancery they won't let it go till they have punched him black and blue. But I say," he added anxiously, "what about Miss Levison? what about Ruth? Is she still with the old man? Does she know?"

"Everything," replied Algernon; "but I don't think it has taken her quite by surprise. Poor girl, she feels the position terribly; it is a cruel trial for her."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Reginald, pacing the room in some agitation, his thoughts drifting readily away from Mr. Levison's sin, which did not really affect him very much; indeed, the father's disgrace, so far from acting against the daughter, gave a fillip to his long-cherished hopes. "My poor Ruth, my poor dear girl," he repeated. "It is rough on her to have such an obnoxious beast of a father, but—well, it is 'an ill wind that blows nobody any good;' perhaps things will work all the better for me, and I shall get Ruth now after all," he added quite briskly.

"Do you mean to say you still think of her—now?" said Mrs. Kent, and he answered promptly:

"Now more than ever! and I should be a mean skunk if I didn't. She can't help having him for a father; she didn't choose him, and she shouldn't suffer for his villanies."

"The sins of the father are visited upon the children; it is the inexorable law of nature that it should be so," she sternly answered.

"Then nature may do its own dirty work, without any help of mine. It isn't much to be proud of anyway. I should like to set Madam Nature right in one or two matters, in such as this particularly." Reginald had a sort of idea that he could put

creation right, and set it going by patent moral machinery of his own invention.

Algernon sat stirring his coffee, listening, and watching their faces with such agitated and painful feelings as they knew nothing of.

"Of course everybody would like to be proud of their parents, as I am of you, dear old lady," added Reginald, patting her on the back with affectionate pride, "but everybody hasn't my luck. A good name is a very good inheritance, but if somebody bespatters it the best thing is to get rid of it, and that my dear Ruth can easily do, if she will only take mine—it isn't al great name; it isn't writ down in the peerage," he added, laughing, "but at least it is an honourable one and comes from honest folk."

"Have you been staying long at Knaresborough?" asked Mrs. Kent; and Algernon told her he had only been there a day or two.

"Ah, then you cannot have seen much of Mr. Levison?"

"Too much, mother; I have seen him once too often."

"Beware of him then," she said quickly; "if he can he will do you some harm—wherever he goes evil follows him."

"You seem to know a mighty deal about the beggar, yet you only saw him that once. But I mustn't stand talking here. I shall see you when I come home to dinner, Algy?"

"No, I go to town this afternoon."

"Then I shall take the first opportunity and go over to Knaresborough myself. I say, do you think I might call and pay my respects to the baronet and Miss Claire, as a brother-in-law, you know? I suppose it's all serene there?" He poked his brother facetiously in the ribs, and in a few minutes mounted his cob and trotted off.

Mother and son were alone together. Deeply stirred by an emotion he could no longer control, though he had kept it so well in check hitherto, Algernon walked to the window and stood there silently looking out, his face turned from his mother. He *must* speak now, yet he scarcely knew in what words to frame the question that she alone could answer. It was hard, very hard for a son to ask a mother whether he inherited a bitter birthright or an honest name. She followed him to the window, looked with anxious inquiry on his face, and laid her hand upon him lightly as she said:

"My son, I see you are troubled about something. What is it?"

For a moment he regarded her in silent earnestness; at last he forced himself to speak the words he had to say.

"I am troubled, mother! My dear mother—I hate to hurt you, yet I fear I must. That man Levison has told me a story which concerns us; it is about the woman named Elizabeth Hollingsworth, and he says that you are she; and that—my God, I can't say it!"

He was answered before she uttered a word; a ghastly pallor overspread her face; her faded eyes dropped before his, she cowered and trembled as though she was afraid of him. She would have fallen had he not supported and placed her in a chair, where she fell back as though her senses were paralyzed, and remained rigid and motionless, but staring now with a fixed terrified stare upon his face. In a moment he was on his knees beside her, chafing her cold hands.

"For God's sake, don't look at me like that!" he cried. "Mother, poor mother, don't speak—don't think of it. Forget as you have forgotten for all these years. There is no need ever to think, ever to speak of it again; nothing is changed—only we two know; it is none of the world's business, and things will go on exactly as they were before." And with all his strong affection he tried to soothe and reconcile her to herself. Presently she melted from the rigid statue into life; her breast heaved and a very rain of tears without her will, without her consciousness, burst from her faded eyes and fell down her furrowed cheek; her whole frame trembled as her head fell forward and one cry broke from her thin white lips.

"Forgive me—my son—my son!" There was more pathos, more eloquence in the one brief exclamation than could have been expressed in a hundred words. The grief of the aged is terrible to witness. It seems as though all such powerful emotions should weaken and grow still, the very memory of repented sin and sorrow fade, and only calm serenity go with the aged to the grave's edge. Their grief is doubly pitiful to see because we have less power to comfort; the shadows are closing, the path narrowing and shortening, and one cannot point out hopes for brighter, happier days to come—in this world at least.

All this poor shame-stricken mother's anxiety seemed to be

for her son Reginald, her eldest born. Recovering from her first prostration her thoughts seemed to rush into the future, not to touch upon the past—she might recall and brood over that afterwards—not now. She clasped Algernon about the neck and looked pitifully in his face.

"Keep it from Regy," she whispered. "He must never know. It would put out the light of his life—he is so proud—he would be angry—he might kill me in his rage. Promise—swear to me that you will keep this secret—that he shall never know."

"I promise, I will swear it if you like. I will trample on this family skeleton and bury it out of sight, as though in the sea a thousand fathoms deep."

"And—and—Algernon," she added in the weak quavering voice of age, for this half-hour seemed to have broken her as ten years might have done. "You forgive me? It all happened so long ago, and I have had this dread hanging over me all my life. I feared the blow would fall one day, but I hoped I might be dead first and not be afraid to look my good sons in the face. We cannot get away from our sins," she added pitifully. "However fast time flies they follow us, follow us even till we reach the grave, and cast a shadow even there."

"My poor mother! Perhaps you would have been happier, more at rest, if we had always known?" said Algernon tenderly.

"No! no! I should not. I should only have suffered more. I could not bear to spoil your lives—my brave handsome boys—to read in your faces that you despised your mother."

"No! no! never that," he interrupted.

"I know you would never speak, would never show it, but I should have read it in your eyes, and felt it in my heart. While I could bear alone, I did. And you both have had happy, prosperous lives." She looked with questioning eagerness on his face. "And you will not blight my Regy's life now?"

"I have promised, mother. *He* at least shall live in happy ignorance," replied Algernon, perhaps a little hurt that all her thoughts should be for Reginald—not one for him.

"And you won't hate me—your poor old mother! I shan't trouble you for long. I feel as though I had got my death blow now."

"Hate you? My dear mother, why will you use such a word? Why will you think of such a thing? God only knows how my

heart aches for you. I would comfort you if I could, but don't let this be like a shadow between us. When you look in my face, don't remember that I know, and I too will try to forget."

Try to forget! He knew how vain that trial would be. He felt as though he had got the curse of a hundred Cains marked in red letters on his forehead, that it would reveal itself in spite of him, write itself in the air somehow, for all the world to see. But he would not aggravate his mother's pain by any expression of his own. He left her with a solemn kiss of love and peace, and carried his aching heart away with him.

All the way to the station on his return journey he felt dazed and giddy like a drunken man. The blood surged through his veins and beat upon his temples like an invisible hammer. Everything was changed; the light of heaven, the trees, the flowers, all seemed poison-fraught; the very air had lost its freshness. "No name, no rights in the land I live in!" he murmured to himself. His eyes were burning and heavy with the weight of hot unshed tears. His brain was alive with conflicting thoughts—one idea predominating over all. Sir Harold Thurlowe, his friend, his dear Claire's father, inherited his father's name, his father's land—his kith and kindred—was his own eldest cousin—but with the fatal bar-sinister between. "My God!" he exclaimed aloud, though there was no one by to hear, "How will it end; how will it all end?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

CROSS PURPOSES.

ON that very morning, and about the same hour that Algernon was undergoing his painful ordeal at Kent House, Mr. Levison sat in his library at Oakwood, before a table that was piled with letters, papers, bills and parchments. Some were important-looking documents, with seals attached; others were yellow and worn with age. With spectacled nose and corrugated brows, he went carefully over every one. Some he put aside, some he tied in packets; others he tore into shreds, and threw them, first into the waste-paper basket, then into the fire. He left not a scrap that ingenuity could piece together out of which a grain of information could be gathered, bearing upon his past life, over which he designed that a curtain should fall like a slab of iron, and shut it from the world's eyes for ever.

He had not been to bed all night, but sat there by the light of his shaded lamp, steadily going through his self-allotted task. So absorbed was he that once or twice, when Ruth opened the door and looked in, he neither saw nor heard her. They had had a terrible scene before they parted for the night; the daughter imploring and trying to awaken the father to a sense of right, to some sign of regret for the evil he had done, the misery he had brought upon the innocent; but her endeavours were of no avail. One moment wild with despair, the next he fouled the air with curses, and cast abuse upon the heads of those she loved best. She made no impression; he was deaf to her ennobling endeavours to lift him to his higher self—that higher self which we all possess, however low and fallen we may be; though from some it recedes far away, waiting for future developments away from the world of flesh—to others it clings close as a shadow, and goes with them, a beautiful spiritual presence, to the end of their mortal lives.

Ruth's persistent faith in and affection for those he hated irritated and annoyed him always. He knew it was there, though she never paraded her feelings before his eyes, and her faith in them was her condemnation of him. He read now in her clear frank eyes the contempt and horror she felt of him and his evil work; and it goaded him to madness. He never reflected that he had always stood aloof, and had given nothing—no parental tenderness or care—to win the love and sympathetic duty of his only child. He never reflected on his own shortcomings, but regarded himself in the present instance as the injured victim of a malignant providence—who gave him his tether and allowed a long life of success, then let loose the dogs, Failure and Disgrace, to pin him at the end of it. He upbraided Ruth, saying:

"You are worse than Judas, for you have sold your own flesh and blood to your Christian friends!" To her indignant denial he replied, "If you did not actually sell me, you rejoice in their triumph over me, and that is almost as bad."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Ruth, in shocked accents. "God knows I have small cause for rejoicing anyway. How can I rejoice that my own father is as guilty as *you are*? though I may, and I do, feel a sorrowful satisfaction in knowing that right will at last be done to the man whose life your sin has blighted.

Oh, father, your violence only aggravates matters. If you could only bring yourself to feel some little regret, some little repentance, and ask God to forgive you—men might have mercy too. Why will you waste time and words when there is so much to be thought of, so much to be done? Consider, and decide how you are going to meet this case."

"Ay, ay, you are right," he answered, suddenly calming down, biting his nails, and looking restlessly round. "I will consider how best to meet it." Then he rubbed his hands together and added with malicious cunning, "I am not at the end of my resources. Ha! ha! Who knows? I may be able to turn the tables on them yet. I don't mean to be so very angry with you, Ruth, my dear; I don't suppose you could really help it; but it is hard for an old man like me to be so alone in the world without a friend—without a friend! - But go, Ruth; go to bed. I'll take your advice and try to face this—difficulty. There, don't stand talking—go—go!" he added, impatiently waving her towards the door.

Ruth left him, but his sudden calming down frightened her more than his openly expressed rage; and though she retired to her room, it was not to rest. She remained wakeful and watchful all the night, listening and trembling at every sound. She knew he fully realized his desperate strait, and feared lest he might do himself some mischief. She watched him stealing about the house stealthily as a ghost—gleaning papers, &c., from every nook and corner of the house. She was not quite satisfied even when she saw him seated at his table busily engaged, inspecting, sorting and docketing them. She felt it was a prelude to something, but to what?

When, tired and hollow-eyed with a sleepless night, she joined him at breakfast in the morning, she found him looking almost cheerful, and he greeted her more kindly than he had done for many a day.

"My dear Ruth," he said, "I have been thinking, and have resigned myself to bear—well, whatever must be borne—even if the worst comes to the worst; but there is no reason why I should not take such advantage in my own behalf as the law allows. *They* are consulting their lawyers; why should not *I* consult *mine*? I have ordered the fly up to take me to the station, and I shall go to town at once for that purpose."

"You are quite right to do that," replied Ruth; "though I don't suppose it will be much use. When shall you be back?"

"In a day or two; but I'll write and let you know. And you'll not be dull; you've got your friends over there, and you can tell 'em all the news, my dear"—he looked at his watch. "If I start at once I shall just catch the train. You can tell them that I went away in good spirits—hopeful, and yet resigned. You'll shake hands, my dear, and wish me success? I'm sure you'll wish me success!"

"I am between two fires, father—I cannot wish anything. I can only wait. Whatever is right I hope will be done. Good-bye."

"Good bye; take care of the house and look after things while I am away, and don't fret. I shouldn't like to come back and find you worn to a thread paper, fretting for your old father."

By this time the fly was at the door waiting for him. He took nothing with him but a rather bulky black bag. A moment before the vehicle turned the corner the old man stood up and looked round as though to take a full view of everything, then took off his hat and waved an "adieu" to Ruth, who stood at the door watching till he was out of sight.

Mr. Levison had not long disappeared when she saw Sir Harold in his dog-cart turn into the lane and follow on her father's track to the railway station. They met upon the platform—the train was late or they were early; for some minutes they walked up and down and looked each other full in the face more than once, but not a sign, not a word of recognition, passed between them; presently the train steamed into the station, and Mr. Levison was swallowed up in a third-class compartment.

Sir Harold got into a first-class carriage, and kept a watchful look out for his ancient enemy at every station they passed through; it was a short train, and there were but a few small wayside stations, so he could without difficulty see the faces of all the passengers that alighted—he was not among them. Evidently he was going to town—but on what errand bent? to seek legal advice perhaps? or hedge himself round in some way that he might better stand the shock that threatened him; or did he suppose that *any* legal instrument could be devised for diverting the course of justice now? But when a man has once been successful in treading crooked ways, he is tempted to have faith in himself; even when he finds the way fast narrowing and he is

lost in a blind alley he is slow to realize that ways and means are ended.

Once arrived at Charing Cross, Sir Harold saw his tall thin figure charging the crowd, and in another moment he was lost to sight.

Seeing that both the gentlemen were away from home, Ruth crossed over to Knaresborough, intending to stay with the ladies there till her father's return. She found the household in rather a disturbed condition—Dorothy, the bright vivacious Dorothy, looking very sad, silent and depressed; Claire, always sympathetic, doubly sympathetic now that a real tangible sorrow afflicted Dorothy. There was a thin veneer of sympathy in Mrs. Blaine's manner, but penetrating that, it was easy to see that she was really more jubilant than grieved: she could not repress the satisfaction that beamed in her eyes and trickled through the expressions of condolence that fell from her lips. In answer to Ruth's inquiry—what was the matter? she pointed to a paragraph in that morning's paper, which had been telegraphed from the seat of war, and which would give an aching heart to many besides Dorothy. After the list of the killed, which fortunately was but brief, there came the casualties among them; following after many others was chronicled, "Captain D'Alton, of the 15th—seriously wounded—left arm amputated; in hospital; doing well."

"My poor Dolly! it is very sad!" exclaimed Ruth, stooping over her and kissing her with sympathetic affection.

"As I tell her," said Mrs. Blaine—"of course I am very sorry and all that sort of thing, but it is nothing very surprising that a soldier should be wounded; it is the fortune of war, every man who goes into the army carries his life in his hand—I'm sure I wish he had never come to The Friars. You remember, Ruth, my dear, how opposed I was to anything——"

"The Friars!" interrupted Dolly with a burst of tears. "How happy we were at the Friars! our happiest days seem to have begun and ended there—and it all seems so long ago."

"You speak selfishly, Dolly," exclaimed her mother reproachfully. "You forget your dear uncle and Claire and me! *Our* greatest happiness and good fortune has been *since* the Friars."

"It was selfish, mamma," answered Dolly frankly; "but I was only thinking of ourselves—of his happiness and mine."

"And as things have turned out," added Mrs. Blaine, "I think you ought to go down on your knees and be thankful that I was so dead against any engagement between you; I know you were both very angry at the time, but now you must see how right I was."

"You were too late then, mamma, and you are too late now," said Dolly, who seemed to have every gibe crushed out of her; "when people care for each other they don't leave off caring because somebody objects to their being 'engaged'; that sort of formality has nothing to do with love, which can live and perhaps thrive better without it."

"I am quite shocked to hear you utter such an immoral sentiment, Dolly," began Mrs. Blaine, whose thoughts and opinions were tied up with the reddest of conventional red tape; and Dorothy interrupted her quickly:

"You would not think it 'immoral' if I were to throw poor George over now that he is in trouble, and marry Sir —, a richer man, which I will never do—never!"

Claire nodded approvingly as much as to say "quite right."

"There can be no talk of 'throwing over' now, my dear Dolly; whatever might have been contemplated under different circumstances, is utterly impossible *now*."

"It seems to me that it should be more possible than ever," exclaimed Claire, rushing into the field on Dolly's side; "when a man is struck down in the course of serving his country, it is the bounden duty, as it should be the greatest happiness, of the woman he loves, to comfort and console him. For my part, poor dear fellow, I should be inclined to join the nursing brigade and go right off to Egypt to take care of him."

"My dear Claire, your visit to California has lowered the tone of your mind; in fact, quite demoralized you! I am sorry to say it, but it has. A year ago you would neither of you have ventured to utter the immodest sentiments you are so glib with now. When I was a girl we should have been ashamed to talk about love in that bold way."

"There was no need for what you call 'immodest' sentiments then," replied Claire. "I don't think you know much about love, auntie; you only think of engagements and marrying—having everything cut and dried by rule—and all that sort of thing. We hear of people parting, who have never been engaged, and never

met again, and yet have gone on caring for one another to the end of their lives!"

"I know there are some romantic idiots in the world," replied Mrs. Blaine sharply, "but I never thought my own daughter would be one of them. However, I don't think there need be any more discussion on this unpleasant subject, for I don't believe poor George will ever live to come back! I'm sure I'm as sorry for him as anybody can be, but I'm not blind to reason—and I'm above all things *practical*—and for his own sake it would be better if he never came back; what would become of him? the mere remnant of a man, and I dare say a very ragged remnant too."

"It is heartless and wrong to speak of him in that way," exclaimed Dolly indignantly; "it is such *remnants* as he who have won the victories and built up the honour and glory of our country—and losing his arm doesn't matter at all; I shall love him just as well without it!"

"Bravo, Dolly!" exclaimed Claire; "you're thorough! I do believe you'd love him all the same if he'd lost his head."

"You shouldn't back her up in her rebellious spirit, Claire."

"I should back her up in following the impulse of her own true heart," exclaimed Claire; "there's nothing mean or small about Dolly; but we'll speak to papa and hear what *he* has to say about it—he's sure to take the right view. I shall make him."

"You exercise an undue influence over your father; indeed he is completely under your thumb—perhaps that is no wonder, considering all things, but it will not be always so," added Mrs. Blaine significantly. "Under his seeming soft yielding ways he has a will of iron, as you will find out if you ever venture to oppose it."

(To be concluded.)